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MARCH 2014 VOLUME 24 ISSUE 3

THE INTERNATIONAL FILM MAGAZINE

Sight & Sound



TILDA SWINTON IN JIM JARMUSCH'S

ONLY LOVERS LEFT ALIVE

PLUS

- LARS VON TRIER'S 'NYMPH()MANIAC' ● DEREK JARMAN ● 'STRANGER BY THE LAKE'
- WES ANDERSON ON 'THE GRAND BUDAPEST HOTEL' ● CLAIRE DENIS ON 'BASTARDS'

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03

*"Have a drink, mate? Have a fight, mate? Have a taste of dust and sweat, mate?
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A film by
TED KOTCHEFF

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The spirit of Ernst Lubitsch lives on in Wes Anderson's *The Grand Budapest Hotel*, a screwball set over several decades in a fictional Eastern European country. He talks to **Isabel Stevens**

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(incorporating Monthly Film Bulletin)
Published monthly by the BFI

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Volume 24 Issue 3 (NS)
ISSN 0037-4806 USPS 496-040

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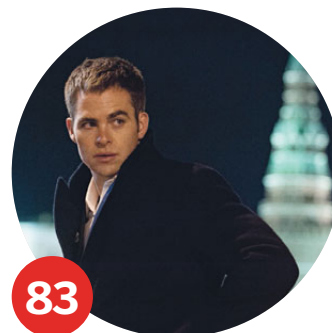
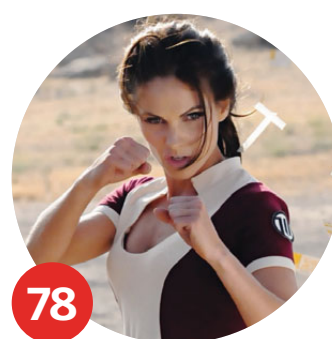
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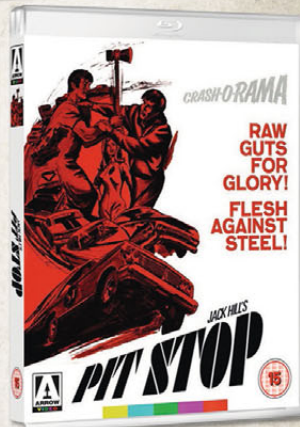
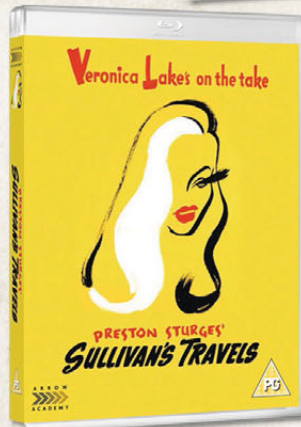
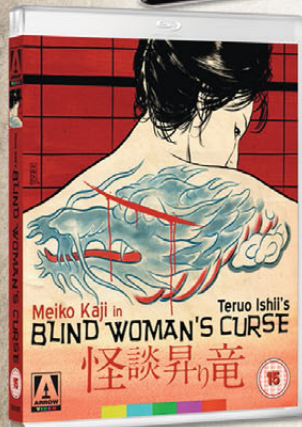
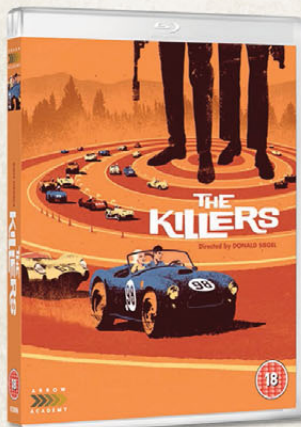
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2013

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APOCALYPSE
2013

DVD
Beaver
2013

CLASSIC FILMS

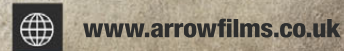
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Tel: 01895 433800

Bookshop distribution

Central Books

Tel: 020 8986 4854

Sight & Sound (ISSN 0037-4806) is published monthly by British Film Institute, 21 Stephen Street, London W1T 1LN and distributed in the USA by Mail Right Int., 1637 Stelton Road B4, Piscataway, NJ 08854. Periodicals Postage Paid at Piscataway, NJ and additional mailing offices. POSTMASTER: Send address changes to Sight & Sound c/o Mail Right International Inc. 1637 Stelton Road B4, Piscataway NJ 08854.

Subscription office:

For subscription queries and sales of back issues and binders contact: Subscription Department

Sight & Sound

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Email: sightandsound@alliance-media.co.uk

Annual subscription rates:

UK £45, Eire and ROW £68

£10 discount for BFI members



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The BFI is a charity, (registration number 287780), registered at 21 Stephen St, London, W1T 1LN



Editorial Nick James



ACTORS' ARK

The end of January, when I'm writing this, is the moment when film's annual cycles overlap and a sharp contrast emerges. Sundance, the first big festival of the new year, is already done; Rotterdam, the first left-field event, is almost over; yet the last big award events celebrating the previous year – the Baftas and Oscars – have not yet happened. You'll soon know whether *12 Years a Slave*, *Gravity* or *American Hustle* has won but you'll also be reminded that award ceremonies are not really so much about films as about which actors show up, whereas festivals push the restart button on the year's hunt for exciting new films.

That contrast between these two aspects of film culture is one that usually finds us on the side of the festivals. As a publication that treats film as an art form, *S&S* publishes far fewer articles about actors than we do about directors. But news from this year's festivals has already made me feel that our traditional position may need some adjustment. I say this not because directorial talent is on the wane but because, with ever more films coming through, it's getting harder to single out the directors who may matter in future. In any case, the auteurist approach can look pretty ragged when it's so hard to work out whose films are likely to get distributed – a decision in which the director is not always the most important element.

Even before Sundance began, Manohla Dargis outlined part of the problem in a *New York Times* piece, entitled 'As indies explode, an appeal for sanity'. In the article she talked about the "co-ordinated madness" of watching 117 features at Sundance when so many of those films – of the like of, say, *Computer Chess* – will have trouble finding a non-mainstream audience because they are competing with 20 other non-mainstream titles, many of which have been released merely to fulfil a contractual agreement. Her plea to the buyers was: "Stop buying so many movies."

Around the same time, sometime *S&S* contributor Gabe Klinger boosted the 'Bright Future' and 'Spectrum' sections at Rotterdam in this manner: "Tired of waking up to *12 Years of American Hustle*-related nonsense. Here are 70 films you've probably never heard of." He was right: I'd heard of none, nor the vast majority of their directors. Few, if any, of those titles will have been at Sundance, so that makes 187 films and counting. When I go to Berlin, another 250 or so will be waiting for me, so you can see how flood-like the

There's no danger of S&S missing the really important films, but when the championing of indie movies becomes such a Darwinian process, you worry for the shyer, less self-assured directors



world of film looks even before the first month of the year is out. That ought to be cause for excitement, but in the current climate it can also be daunting. Quality will out, of course, and there's no danger of us missing the really important films, but when the championing of indie or specialist movies becomes such a Darwinian process, you worry for the shyer, less self-assured or marketing-friendly directors.

Which brings us, by way perhaps of emotional opposites, to the actors. We have Tilda Swinton on the cover this month not only because she's one of the two stars of Jim Jarmusch's *Only Lovers Left Alive* (page 50) but also because she's in Wes Anderson's *The Grand Budapest Hotel* (page 30) and was Derek Jarman's chief female muse (page 40). Nick Pinkerton's interview with Jarmusch was intended as a career overview but, characteristically, Jarmusch doesn't do the past – and nor does he spend too much time in the piece dwelling on his actors.

But whenever terrific actors like Swinton and Tom Hiddleston lend their considerable celebrity, as well as their talent, to an indie work like Jarmusch's study of a pair of eternal vampire groovers, they're not only giving the film a chance of flourishing in this flooded marketplace, they're also keeping alive their contact with the ethos of the impact-making smaller films with which most actors establish their careers. Swinton, for instance, has always passionately acknowledged her debt to Jarman, just as Hiddleston, despite his supervillain fame as Loki in the Thor movies, makes himself available for a walk-on role in Joanna Hogg's latest film *Exhibition*. Actors have the cachet to make films happen that might not otherwise. I have a feeling that their aesthetic choices are going to be more important in shaping how we make ours in the future. ☺

IN THE FRAME

THE MAN WITH THE MIDAS TOUCH



Drama out of a crisis: Feng Xiaogang's *Aftershock* explores the awful dilemma faced by a mother trying to rescue her twins after the Tangshan earthquake

Look beyond the commercial success of his films and you'll find a director of true artistic merit in Feng Xiaogang

By Simon Fowler

Few directors alive understand the hopes, fears and desires of the Chinese population better than Feng Xiaogang. While his contemporaries Zhang Yimou, Chen Kaige and Tian Zhuangzhuang – who form part of the so-called Fifth Generation of Chinese

filmmakers – caused waves at European film festivals with, respectively, *Raise the Red Lantern* (1991), *Yellow Earth* (1984) and *The Horse Thief* (1986), it was actually Feng's work that forged the greatest connection with Chinese audiences.

Often labelled a 'populist' director and pigeonholed by unhelpful comparisons in the Western press with Steven Spielberg (both their films make money, you see), over the past couple of decades Feng has created a body of genre-defying work that deserves attention on its merits rather than simply for the hefty box-office receipts it generates. With a selection of his films

screening at the BFI Southbank in February, it's a tremendous opportunity to discover one of China's most highly prized directors.

Born in Beijing in 1958, Feng was 20 when universities and colleges reopened after 10 years of the Cultural Revolution and he was able to pass the entrance exam to the Beijing Film Academy. But sadly for Feng, his single-parent family was unable to afford the fees and his inclusion in the legendary class of 1978 (which saw the likes of Zhang and Chen set the world alight) was not to be. Feng instead joined the army and worked as a set designer for a military art ensemble in Beijing, before making his way

AV Festival

Taking place throughout March across North-East England, this edition of the ever-imaginative biennial festival takes as its focus the theme of 'extraction'. Highlights include the industrial films of Wang Bing, Rachel Boynton's oil industry doc 'Big Men' (right) and a weekend of post-colonial cinema.



Glasgow Film Festival

Bookended by Wes Anderson's 'The Grand Budapest Hotel' and Jonathan Glazer's 'Under the Skin', the tenth edition of the festival (20 February – 2 March) promises numerous delights, among them a focus on Chile, and Hollywood cinema from 1939 (including 'Ninotchka', right)



ON OUR
RADAR

into television and eventually screenwriting.

Like most filmmakers of his generation hoping to make films in the early 1990s, Feng had to balance his desire to make socially aware films with the increased censorship brought in after the Tiananmen Square massacre in June 1989. Although he earned a Golden Rooster nomination at China's film awards for his screenplay for Zheng Xiaolong's *Unexpected Passion* (1991) – the tragic story of a man falling in love with a woman with leukaemia – his clashes with official censors pushed him towards the politically safe territory of comedy.

The concept of New Year films (*hesui pian*) had been present in Hong Kong cinema since the 50s and 60s, and even then could be traced back to Hollywood's predilection for tent-pole releases during key holidays. Encouraged by Han Sanping – director of the Beijing Film Studio – Feng made his first *hesui pian* with *Party A, Party B* (1997) and quickly established the convention with his next two Chinese New Year movies *Be There or Be Square* (1998) and *Sorry Baby* (1999). With dialogue rich in sarcastic humour, expressed in a distinctive Beijing drawl, these films took subtle swipes at pompous authority figures while never skirting too close to sensitive material. The loose trilogy of films is also notable for the appearance of Feng's most consistent collaborator, Ge You.


With a face and delivery that lend themselves equally well to playing comedy or drama, hero or villain, Ge has proved the perfect fit for Feng's output. Perhaps his most critically acclaimed role is as the TV host caught in a web of infidelity in *Cell Phone* (2004). Highlighting how the ubiquity of telecommunications are irreversibly changing human relationships, Feng's dark and engaging film skilfully questions Chinese society's attitude towards extra-marital affairs.

Emboldened by his huge box-office success, Feng was able to push the boundaries of the subject matter of his films while also testing his visual style to the limit. *Assembly* (2007) was a unique form of Chinese war film – not made to serve any particular political message, it is simply a realistic, bloody depiction of the battles between Communists and Nationalists in the late 1940s. The blood-soaked war scenes inevitably led to comparisons with Spielberg's *Saving Private Ryan* (1998). But as always, and even in a film of such stylised violence, Feng manages to balance the personal and the tragic, once again



Feng Xiaogang

proving his Midas touch at the box office.

Perhaps the film that best exemplifies Feng's ability to explore the still sensitive wounds of recent Chinese history – and the characteristics of the Chinese themselves – is *Aftershock* (2010). Set in the immediate aftermath of the Tangshan earthquake, which killed approximately a quarter of a million people in 1976, the film tells the heartbreaking story of a mother who must decide which of her twins to rescue from the rubble. With the 2008 earthquake in Sichuan still fresh in the mind, Feng was able to fashion a picture of great emotional sensitivity and impact. Acclaimed by critics, *Aftershock* easily demonstrates Feng's place among his peers who are so often lauded at film festivals around the world. He provides the insights we all desperately seek into what China is and what it might become. 

i 'Feng Xiaogang: Spectacular China' runs until 22 February at BFI Southbank, London. It forms part of a year-long celebration of Chinese film that continues with 'A Century of Chinese Cinema' between June and October, also at BFI Southbank

ANATOMY OF A MOVIE

HER

22% *Harold and Maude* (1971)

15% *Electric Dreams* (1984)

14% *Lars and the Real Girl* (2007)

12% *Black Mirror: Be Right Back* (2013)

10% *Blue Valentine* (2010)

8% *Weird Science* (1985)

8% *2001: A Space Odyssey* (1968)

5% *AI: Artificial Intelligence* (2001)

4% *The Stepford Wives* (1972)

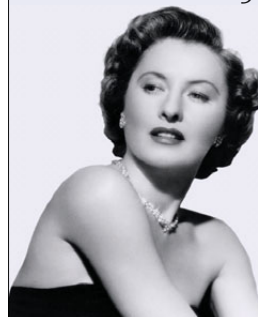
2% *Colossus: The Forbin Project* (1969)



QUOTE OF THE MONTH

BARBARA STANWYCK

"Put me in the last 15 minutes of a picture and I don't care what happened before. I don't even care if I was in the rest of the damned thing – I'll take it in those 15 minutes"



That Sinking Feeling

Bill Forsyth prefers his teenage heist debut to its successor 'Gregory's Girl', but his authentic depiction of 1980s Glasgow has previously only been available in the UK on a DVD with re-dubbed accents. The inventive no-budget comedy (right) has now been remastered on DVD and Blu-ray and will be released by BFI Flipside in the manner Forsyth intended (alongside some of the director's shorts, plus extras) on 21 April.



Borderlines Film Festival

New films from established directors and little-known voices alike can be found in 32 venues across Herefordshire and Shropshire from 28 February to 6 March. In addition to thematic strands dedicated to the sea and music, the festival celebrates French Cinema and the work of Japanese filmmaker Kore-eda Hirokazu, including 'Nobody Knows' (right).



ENGINE OF CHANGE

The motor scooter came to represent working class dreams of escape in the years after World War II



By Hannah McGill

The quasi-autobiographical comedy *Dear Diary* (1993) begins with a section in which its director/protagonist

Nanni Moretti buzzes around his home city, Rome, on a Vespa motor scooter. His chosen mode of conveyance is an appealingly eccentric one, well suited to the solitary roaming, contemplation of architecture and impromptu pursuit of Jennifer Beals that he undertakes in the course of the film.

But the motor scooter, in the Italian context, also bears a wider significance. Launched in 1946, the Vespa was the speedy result of its manufacturer, Piaggio, moving out of the aeronautical industry upon the cessation of World War II, and addressing instead the demand for a low-cost means of transport



Roman Vespa: *Dear Diary*

for the masses. But as Italy emerged from the privations of war and entered the period of its so-called 'economic miracle' – bolstered by the support of the USA, for whom it was an important new ally – the Vespa became emblematic not of relief from poverty, but of new-found cultural confidence and youthful, carefree style. As Italy's economy burgeoned and its rural poor moved en masse into cities to take advantage of the improved conditions, demand for cheap, mass-produced consumer goods skyrocketed. Italy was sold abroad as a holiday destination, and its starlets to American audiences as embodiments of a ripe and risqué sensuality. If ownership of a push-bike promised freedom and self-respect to the urban poor of Vittorio De Sica's *Bicycle Thieves* (1948), within a few years of that film's release the Vespa represented something else: not industry but leisure; not self-motivation, but a playful individualism; not social mobility, but an ostensible levelling of opportunity. Neorealism, with its emphasis upon the frank depiction of economic injustice, had brought Italian cinema to global attention; but the time of the economic miracle saw a dramatic shift in both Italian standards



The kids with a bike: *Quadrophonia*

of living, and in Italian self-presentation to overseas eyes. *Roman Holiday* (1953), in which a Vespa scooter piloted by Gregory Peck's American reporter whisks Audrey Hepburn's European princess away from her sober duties, exemplifies a new, tourist-friendly view of Italy: a land of sun and freedom where responsibilities and reserve can be jettisoned.

Of course, not everyone was ready to hop on a Vespa and celebrate the shiny new Italy. Among the most scathing detractors of the economic miracle was Pier Paolo Pasolini. To him, its accessible consumerism was counter-revolutionary, and morally ruinous to the social class he preferred to regard as innocent martyrs; it also disproportionately benefited the urban north of Italy over the rural south, and left those whose lives it did not improve more hopeless than ever before. Moretti – also a leftist suspicious of empty 'progress', also nostalgic for Italy's 'innocent' past – makes the final stop on his Vespa trip the place where Pasolini was murdered in 1975, either by the lowlife he so romanticised or the politicians he so disdained.

The association of the Vespa with social aspiration and the pursuit of pleasure informs its adaptation in the United Kingdom as a fetish object of the late 1950s and early 1960s mod subculture. Colin MacInnes's novel *Absolute Beginners*, published in 1959, emphasises the influence of Italian style – Vespas, coffee bars, sharply tailored suits – on its young mod characters, while the awkwardness of its ill-fated 1986 big-screen adaptation by Julien Temple is captured in the publicity shot of stars Eddie O'Connell and Patsy Kensit frozen static atop a pristine, museum-piece Vespa.

More dynamic was the use of the scooter in Franc Roddam's *Quadrophonia* (1979) – this time Lambrettas as well as Vespas – again carrying the promise of escape from the dead-ends of working class life, but ultimately again

THE FIVE KEY...

POSTER ROWS

Every now and then a film poster campaign turns bus shelters into sites of contestation. Is there really no such thing as bad publicity?



By Ashley Clark

The Italian distributor BIM was forced to apologise when its poster for *12 Years a Slave* – dominated by Brad Pitt rather than the film's actual star – prompted outrage, while the hand-drawn UK quad for the homoerotic

thriller *Stranger by the Lake* has been stripped of all 'perceived nudity' to qualify for outdoor use. These are only the most recent examples of poster art ruffling feathers...



1 The Outlaw (1941)

Howard Hughes's western had fallen foul of the Hays Code when initially released in 1943. That didn't deter the eccentric billionaire from whipping up a storm with the gaudily designed poster – members of the public claimed to be shocked at a glimpse of Jane Russell's (actually invisible) nipple.



2 Moscow on the Hudson (1984)

In 1987, artist Saul Steinberg successfully sued various parties involved with producing and promoting the Robin Williams comedy on the grounds that its poster copied the celebrated 'View of the World from 9th Avenue' he had created for a *New Yorker* cover. The defence that the poster was a fair-use 'parody' didn't wash.

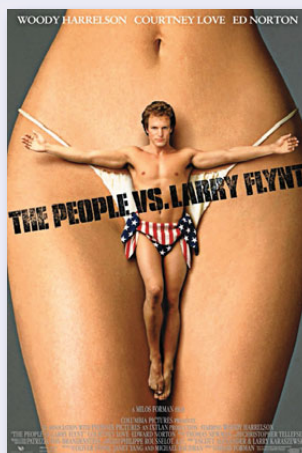


Escape vehicle: Hepburn and Peck find freedom in *Roman Holiday*

A push-bike promised freedom and self-respect; the Vespa represented something else: not industry but leisure

as much a symbol of misguided optimism and misdirected affluence as of freedom. The Lambretta ridden by disillusioned young mod Jimmy (Phil Daniels) transports him away from his parents' limited worldview, but also away from moral responsibility and into the false consciousness of hero worship. When that hero, Ace Face (Sting), turns out to have feet of clay after all (in the form of a lowly, normal job!), Jimmy's revenge is to take Ace's scooter and destroy it. The fantasy is over; the scooter, as the vehicle of the fantasy, takes the punishment. Like Audrey Hepburn's princess in *Roman Holiday*, Ace has used his showy means of transport to help him to play a role – but he has passed himself off as more noble and wealthy than he is, not less.

That *Quadrophenia* conveys an ultimately sad and negative image of the mod lifestyle and its values has not stopped it being held in high regard by those who still prize the subculture, of which the Italian motor scooter remains a potent emblem. Sporadic mod revivals have seen the scooter presented as a British icon; Rowan Joffe's 2010 adaptation of *Brighton Rock* shifted the novel's late 1930s action into the 60s to allow its characters a piece of the mods vs rockers action. That an object brought in to being to facilitate working-class dreams of escape should so often feature in narratives about their failure is an irony Pasolini might appreciate; Moretti, having scooted his way to his predecessor's place of death, opts to stop diarising and let the visual speak for itself. 📺



3 **The People Vs. Larry Flynt (1996)**
The irony was inescapable when the Motion Picture Association of America banned the poster for Milos Forman's biopic of the pornographer and defender of free speech Larry Flynt (Woody Harrelson). Instead of Harrelson suspended Christ-like over a scantily clad model, his head was shown with a US flag taped over his mouth.



4 **Amen. (2002)**
The poster for Costa-Gavras's drama about the Catholic church during the Holocaust merged a crucifix with a swastika, infuriating Christian groups. But French judge Jean-Claude Magendie refused to ban it, ruling that there was no legal objection to the poster that would warrant limiting freedom of expression.



5 **The Road to Guantanamo (2006)**
The original poster for Michael Winterbottom's harrowing docudrama fell foul of the MPAA, who ruled that the image of a detainee with a burlap sack over his head was an inappropriately graphic depiction of torture and might upset children. The final version simply featured the detainee's chained hands.

HOW HE FELT



Low stakes: Terence Nance in a film about a 'not-quite relationship not quite working out'

Director and star Terence Nance explains how *An Oversimplification of Her Beauty* grew out of a single brief phone-call in 2006

By Sam Davies

"It's like, goddess worship as a path to emotional maturity. Maybe. Something like that." Speaking over Skype from a snowbound Boston, Terence Nance is answering a somewhat unfair challenge to describe his debut feature *An Oversimplification of Her Beauty* in a single sentence. The film begins with a simple scenario: Nance, exhausted after a long day at work, is disappointed when the woman he is beginning to fall in love with (played by her real-life inspiration Namik Minter) cancels their evening plans by phone. The film repeats a simple question, which became the title of a 2006 student short: 'How Would You Feel?'. Expanded and retitled, the film begins with this moment and essentially never leaves it, circling around it, looping back in time to add context and background, chewing obsessively over its significance. Along the way the film offers impressionistic sketches of Nance's bohemian Brooklyn social scene, and long, often gorgeously inventive animated sequences illustrating his internal monologue. An older man narrates the young Nance's dilemma with the dispassionate authority of a PBS or BBC documentary – the voiceover delivered by veteran actor Reg E. Cathey with perfectly pitched mock-seriousness.

That opening phone-call marked the beginning of six years' work for Nance. "It was in that very moment, literally. I hung up the phone and wrote out the entire movie basically, the voiceover in its entirety for 'How Would You Feel?', and everything that ended up in *An Oversimplification* too."

The freshness of *An Oversimplification of Her*

Beauty in part comes from the sense that it's as hungry for ideas from literature, graphic art and music as from film history. There's no oppressive sense of the film-school graduate painstakingly displaying knowledge and repaying debts. The voiceover's mischievously baroque language is indebted to Toni Morrison and Louise Erdrich; Nance cites Milan Kundera too: "Now I think about it, I read *The Book of Laughter and Forgetting* like two weeks before I wrote [the script]," Nance says. His fine art background feeds into the animation's teeming surfaces (he mentions the painter Barkley Hendricks and the Kenyan-American sculptor Wangechi Mutu), as does the psychedelic cover art of the Miles Davis, Sly Stone and Alice Coltrane album covers he grew up around.


Music is woven into the texture of *An Oversimplification*. Nance compares the film to a blues – "The whole idea of the blues being of course to memorialise a really negative experience and make it funny and light, but still, you know, it was terrible!" Its structure, switching back and forth between the original short 'How Would You Feel?' and the newer, animated sections, is musical too: "At the time I didn't know how to write a screenplay," Nance says. "I'd never seen a screenplay so I just wrote it like a song: it actually says Verse, Chorus, Verse, Chorus in the script." Some of the soundtrack is supplied by the Californian producer Flying Lotus, the rest by Nance himself under his musical alias Terence Etc., on top of his multiple roles as writer, director, lead actor and animator.

'It is 100 per cent self-involved. But I don't think that's grounds for criticising art. Or else you wouldn't have Annie Hall'

Growing up as part of an artistic family in Dallas, Texas, surrounded by photography, theatre direction and music, Nance sang, acted, wrote poetry and drew obsessively, but cinema was less of a presence. "We weren't really a movie-watching family. But I remember I watched *2001: A Space Odyssey* in my early twenties and was like 'I've seen this', and my dad said, 'I showed that to you when you were four.' And *Days of Heaven*, he showed that to me when I was really young. My earliest theatre experiences were when our whole church would go see *Daughters of the Dust*, *Malcolm X* or *Do the Right Thing*."

While the Kubrick and Malick films have left their mark, there's little of the young Spike Lee's anger or social engagement in Nance's playfulness or the low-stakes nature of the scenario (a not-quite relationship not quite working out between two good-looking twentysomething New Yorkers). But when I put it to Nance that the film could be accused of being solipsistic or self-involved, his reply is unhesitating. "I think it is 100 per cent self-involved. But I don't think that's grounds for criticising any art at all. I think so many movies are made from the first-person perspective of the artist and I think whether the movie is significant, revelatory, good, worth watching has nothing to do with the reductive idea that it is 'only' about the person who had this experience. You wouldn't have *Annie Hall*, *8 1/2* or any Fellini movie, any Woody Allen; so almost every movie is like that. And the movies that aren't it can be rationalised as stand-ins, allegorical or metaphorical for the director's experiences."

"I think it's a self-portrait," Nance says, and as we discuss the film's resistance to genre categories (is it an essay? A lyrical memoir? A love story?) he describes how it arrived at an intensely introspective place almost by default. "I was attempting to make something about our perspectives on each other, in this thing that was not love, but not *not* love, and what it became was just me talking about myself, which is really self-portraiture. Because I couldn't really even access [Namik Minter] to the point of wanting her to be able to talk about herself. The original concept of the whole project was that she would make a movie also, and it would be the same length, and you could see both. But it didn't turn out like that, so instead of a love story or a connection story, I'm left with the self-portrait."

By the end, it's a moot point whether Nance has answered his own questions or left himself with more to answer. Minter's ambivalence about their relationship and collaboration leaves a sense of absence in the film. "I think there's a by-product of this failed attempt at giving her that space, or making that space for her perspective, or just purely the desire for her perspective to even exist and know it," Nance says. "And in the failure of that you get a nice illustration of what the dynamic was between us." 

 **An Oversimplification of Her Beauty** is released on 7 February and is reviewed on page 74

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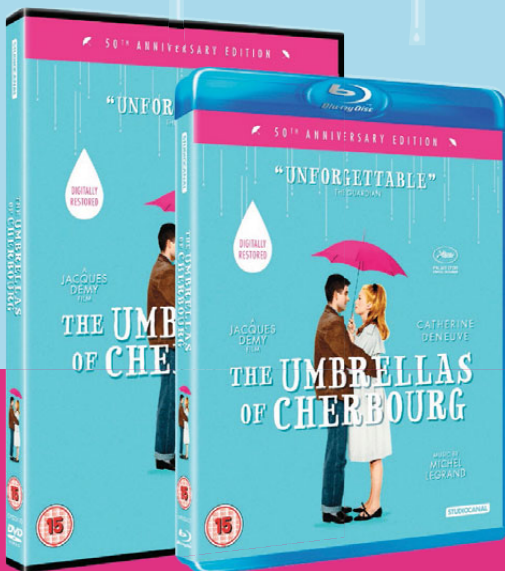
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SEEING THE WOOD FOR THE TREES

The process of filmmaking involves a number of steps, and sometimes a lot of them are stumbles



By Mark Cousins

I didn't intend to go filming yesterday. The wind had dropped, the rain had stopped and after days at my desk, and a bit bored

and flat, I just wanted to go for a long walk.

When I hit the street, the first thing I saw was an abandoned Christmas tree lying on the pavement, waiting to be collected. Then another. Then a third. They were like dead fame. December's intoxications had been the future once.

The trees gave me – I was going to say an idea, but it was less than that, more fleeting... a thought. As kids, on night-time car journeys in December, our parents got us to count Christmas trees we could see twinkling in windows, probably to stop us being bored or bickering. As I walked yesterday, I realised I could count the discarded Christmas trees. I smiled. Then the thought grew a bit, as they do, as background music does, when I saw that the difference between counting twinkling trees and dying trees could be seen as the sad contrast between childhood and middle age.

Thinking begets filming. As well as counting the trees, I could film them. I had my little camera with me, as I always do. I filmed one, side on, lying beside a blue recycling bin. And then I filmed another. As I did so, I imagined editing them together: short street scenes. A film called *Edinburgh, January 2013*, perhaps. Then I had a brainwave. I could edit them to a cheery Christmas song, to add to the pathos. Maybe Mario Lanza singing 'O Christmas Tree'! Except, here's where it becomes interesting: I at once realised that the brainwave wasn't a brainwave. Using such songs would be too obvious. Scrub that idea. It would be better to use just the sounds of cars driving past and footsteps – the noises of the morning city. What I was enjoying on my walk was the January-ness of it. The raw sounds would add to that.

The thoughts, which at first felt so fleeting, so far back in my head, were coming forward. They weren't just a consequence of my walk, they were becoming the walk. They were steering it. I started walking up posh streets where residents were more likely to buy real Christmas trees. Soon I was seeing three in a row, or more. Filming made the thinking, which had initially been merely emotional (childhood versus middle age, etc), visual too. I began to realise that close-ups of the trees didn't feel right. Wider shots, showing the whole street scene, were better because they showed how abandoned the trees looked. As I framed the wide shots, I started to notice that, on such a grey morning, each image had a splash of bright colour – a yellow door, a blue recycling bin, a red post box, etc. Aha, I



thought, *this is good*. A little film that seems to be about abandoned Christmas trees is really about splashes of colour. The secret meaning. All films should have a secret meaning.

I was happy with this thought. It was an improvement on the previous two (Christmas song, shoot in close-up). But then, as I filmed the trees in wide shots, I noticed that in each image I could see the windows of the houses from which the trees had been abandoned. I shoot near ground level, with a 20cm tripod, so I was at the same level as the trees, looking up into the rooms whose occupants had had a party (Christmas) that was now over. I realised that if I looked at the window, then at the tree, I could better imagine the rejection of the latter. The image was more dynamic because my eye moved across it. For the rest of the morning, I was absorbed by my filming. I must have seen 60 trees, and filmed 20. When you're thinking of something, you see it everywhere, as if the world has realigned, just as when you learn a new word you suddenly hear it everywhere.

I've described my quite mundane thought process above in order to show that it is a process, in this case comprising six steps

When you're thinking of something, you see it everywhere, as if the world has realigned

(childhood, music, close-up, wide, colour, windows), what the Italians call *pentimenti*. These are the remnants of previous images found beneath the surface of paintings, representing changes of mind during their composition. We can see them in the work of Leonardo da Vinci. I argued in my book *The Story of Film* that, as well as in an individual work (say the development of a screenplay), you can see changes of mind across the whole history of the movies. I took a term from art historian E.H. Gombrich to say that filmmakers borrow from, and make adjustments to, the way their predecessors filmed, by a process of schema plus adjustment.

The key thing to say about changes of mind is that they're so enjoyable – exciting even. I loved yesterday. Without my camera, my musings would have been lopsided. I wouldn't have been able to test my visual thought and, therefore, to have improved it. Thinking better, wiser, fresher is one of the best things in life.

This column is my seventh step. As I write it, I clarify the other six. And an eighth occurs: I think of the concept of '*felix culpa*', written about by the fifth-century Algerian known by Christians as St Augustine (who's seldom quoted in *Sight & Sound*). The 'happy fall' is the good that comes out of bad, the skip after a stumble. Yesterday, for me, started with a bit of a stumble, then something unforeseen made my brain work a bit and, once it did, my camera did too. ☺

DEVELOPMENT TALE

STARRED UP



Hard cell: Jack O'Connell as young offender Eric in *Starred Up*, scripted by Jonathan Asser

It took years of creative writing courses and a lot of professional advice for Jonathan Asser to get recognised as a newcomer

By Charles Gant

Jonathan Asser may have won Best British Newcomer at last October's BFI London Film Festival with his debut screenplay *Starred Up*, but the writing method he employed for the prison drama is not one he would recommend to others, or even himself. No treatment, outline, story arc or even a list of characters. "I just plunged in," he says. "I started on page one, and every time I went back to it, I'd start again at the beginning. I was just really getting to know the characters and letting them do what they wanted. There was no plan, no structure at all. I never even really had a first draft. Literally at each session, I'd start at page one, so the first act I'd done 100 times before I even got on to the second act."

It wasn't until 2003, when Asser was well into his 30s, that he first considered the idea of writing a screenplay. He was working at the time in the education unit of Wandsworth prison, teaching life skills, while nurturing his own

poetry writing, when he received encouragement from a fellow poet. This was Marie-Louise Hogan, who also worked as a writer's agent negotiating contracts for Talkback Productions. "Some of the poems were informed by my prison experiences," Asser says, "but I think what struck her was the visual quality. She had a sense that I had a visual imagination. She suggested that I have a think about writing a screenplay, otherwise it would never have occurred to me."

To learn how to become a screenwriter, Asser followed a path that had already served him well with his poetry: attending a series of creative writing courses run by the charitable Arvon Foundation at rural locations in Devon, West Yorkshire, Shropshire and Inverness-shire. Having regularly attended poetry courses for "about seven years", in 2004 he switched to screenwriting courses, first progressing his unproduced short 'Parker Knoll' and then his prison-set feature, which went through several titles including *L. Plate*, prison slang for life sentence.

Arvon uses current industry practitioners to mentor the attendees, and after each course Asser maintained contact with the professionals he'd just encountered. It was author A.L. Kennedy who ultimately proved crucial in getting the film made – passing it to the Glasgow-based Sigma Films and

thus into the hands of *Young Adam* director David Mackenzie – but along the way Asser received creative input from a slew of Arvon mentors including Penny Woolcock (*Mischief Night*), Rupert Walters (*Restoration*), Neil Hunter (*Lawless Heart*), Olivia Hetreed (*Girl with a Pearl Earring*) and David Pirie (*Breaking the Waves*, uncredited).

"I certainly went every year," Asser says, "and some years I'd do more than one. I didn't go on holidays – my holidays were Arvon courses. You get to spend a week with these people, they read your material and you build a relationship with them and that is absolutely invaluable. I'm almost embarrassed to give you all those names, it sounds a bit mercenary. I'm very honoured they gave me all that help. When you're a writer doing your thing on your own, at the foot of this mountain, having people like that take you seriously is worth a million dollars – it's permission to take yourself seriously. Everyone needs role models and all those people have been role models to me in one way or another."

Walters helped the aspiring screenwriter secure an agent at United Talent, while another Arvon mentor, film entrepreneur Chris Dennis, made a particularly vital creative contribution: "I had an uncle and nephew in my story, and Chris said, 'Make it a father and son, it's going

to make it much closer to home and much more visceral.' And he was absolutely right."

Starred Up gets its name from the term given to young offenders whose violent behaviour sees them moved up to adult prison. In Asser's film, young Eric (Jack O'Connell) has his rage challenged in the therapy group run by prison worker Oliver (Rupert Friend), while working out his issues with fellow prisoner Neville (Ben Mendelsohn), the father he hasn't seen since infancy. It's natural to assume that Oliver is an avatar for Asser, who initiated just such a therapy group for Wandsworth's most violent prisoners and began his career at Feltham Young Offenders Institution. But the screenwriter insists it's more complicated than that.

"Oliver, Nev and Eric are all aspects of myself. It appears that Oliver is like me, but actually it's all three. That's really the therapeutic benefit for me in writing that stuff, getting it out on the page. It was very easy to tap into them and put them in play. It just came from within, and that's probably always how I am going to write."

Asser's creative process might be described as like improv, except with no actors in the room – and he accepts the analogy. "Every time I sat down and wrote it, it evolved. The characters led the way. I just got to know those characters, which are within me, and then I let them do their thing."

While *Starred Up* had benefited from an unusual amount of professional input before reaching Sigma, the development process became more regularised when Film4 boarded

'When you're a writer doing your thing on your own, having professionals take you seriously is worth a million dollars'

the project in 2011. With understandable modest caution, Asser had back-pedalled on the Oliver character, and Film4 now wanted to bring him more to the fore. "They were fascinated by my real-life story," Asser explains. "We put a lot of that stuff in. But it actually isn't in the final film: we kind of went back in the edit. However the ghost of it is there, and it was very beneficial to go through that process. A really key thing that Film4 came in with was the idea of the love triangle [between the three men]."

With all of the action taking place in one location – the film was shot at the disused Crumlin Road Gaol in north Belfast – Mackenzie had the freedom to shoot sequentially, which allowed one final element of script development, in collaboration with actor Mendelsohn. Says Asser, "Ben's experience and skill and understanding of the story was hugely important to us, and at several points he took us back to an earlier draft from a year before, to several scenes that were no longer in the shooting draft. With David's encouragement, he and I spent a lot of time talking through the story over the course of the five-week shoot. He had a big role in terms of thinking through how to make the ending work." 📌

i *Starred Up* is released on 21 March and will be reviewed in next month's issue

THE NUMBERS OSCAR CONTENDERS

By Charles Gant

As critics and industry delegates toured the 2013 film festivals, it gradually became clear that the pictures contending for awards consideration this year represented one of the strongest slates in recent memory, with *Gravity* and *12 Years a Slave* making most of the early running. But commercial outcomes were much less certain. Steve McQueen had yet to break out of the arthouse, and a harrowing film about slavery starring Chiwetel Ejiofor did not suggest a box-office slamdunk. Tom Hanks on a cargo ship hijacked by Somali pirates: hard to call. A three-hour comedy from Martin Scorsese about a convicted Wall Street trader – perhaps not as commercially appealing as previous Leonardo DiCaprio collaborations.

Even analysts with a more optimistic take had to concede that the slate seemed to offer nothing as commercially appealing as the 2013 contenders, which included *Django Unchained* (\$421m worldwide), *Les Misérables* (\$433m) and *Life of Pi* (\$609m).

So far, however, the results have been spectacular, especially in the UK. Despite the challenge of an 18 certificate and an epic duration, *The Wolf of Wall Street* passed £10m in just ten days, and looks on course for £20m. *12 Years a Slave* had reached £11m at press time and appears to be headed in a similar direction. And *American Hustle* is surging far ahead of previous top titles from David O. Russell: *Silver Linings Playbook* (£5.3m), *The Fighter* (£6.3m) and *Three Kings* (£7m).

For Clare Binns, chief booker at arthouse exhibitor Picturehouse, the challenge has been to accommodate all the releases. "Each week," she explains, "you're taking off films that are taking extraordinary amounts of money, and that's the nature of this period."

While indie exhibitors would certainly prefer to have the riches spread more evenly throughout the year, the evolution of an 'awards season' in January and February does create audience excitement and a conversation around big-screen binge viewing. "This is the time of year when people are coming to the cinema once a



Packing 'em in: *The Wolf of Wall Street*

week rather than once a month," says Binns. "It's gangbusters. We're putting in shows at 10.30 in the morning at the weekend, and 11 o'clock at night, and still taking good money!"

So far, the only Best Picture Oscar nominee to miss its mark is Alexander Payne's *Nebraska*, with audiences evidently failing to respond to a black-and-white marketing image featuring a dishevelled Bruce Dern. By the time the six Oscar nominations were announced, the film was virtually over in UK cinemas. Perhaps a 'mis-sell', with an illustrated poster, would have worked better, suggests Binns.

In contrast, several titles that did not earn the hoped-for nominations – notably *The Railway Man* and the Coens' *Inside Llewyn Davis* – have performed well, creating further headaches for the programmers, who tussle with the distributors every Monday in a process the industry calls "holdovers": "It's a bloody nightmare, to be honest, but it's a nice nightmare to have," says Binns. "It's much nicer to have the difficulty of working out all the great films you're going to play than struggling to fill the screens. But it makes the whole business very intense. It's pretty horrible for everyone on a Monday." 📌

2014 BEST PICTURE OSCAR NOMINEES AT US AND UK BOX-OFFICE*

Film	US gross	UK gross
Gravity	\$261m	£29.6m
American Hustle	\$127m	£11.2m
Captain Phillips	\$106m	£15.9m
The Wolf of Wall Street	\$98.5m	£10.9m
12 Years a Slave	\$43.6m	£11.0m
Philomena	\$25.8m	£10.9m
Dallas Buyers Club	\$20.4m	released 7 Feb
Her	\$19.2m	released 14 Feb
Nebraska	\$11.7m	£586,000

*Grosses at January 27 (accurate to three significant figures)

WE'VE NO ANGELS

BFI FILM FUND INSIGHTS

British film has plenty of homegrown creative talent and ideas but what it needs are some bold investors



By Ben Roberts

This is my second February at the Film Fund, the month when difficult decisions are made. Our budget is renewed every

April, but since we are required to commit our funding at least six weeks prior to production we find ourselves hedging bets as we try to spend the year's budget exactly. This means forecasting which projects will fall apart or push back, which will get there if we dig deeper. Meanwhile the producer hunts around for loose change – even in the afterglow of a good year for British film, raising finance is a scramble.

Most independently produced films in the UK rely on some or all of the following: the UK film tax relief; Lottery money from the BFI, and/or Creative England, Creative Scotland, Film Agency for Wales, Northern Ireland Screen; Film4 and BBC Films; UK distributors; and a UK sales agent advance or gap (ie debt financing) against foreign sales. In 2013 nearly 20 per cent of all UK films produced received funding from us, BBC Films or Film4, in all around £35m – a hefty public investment, but it only stretches so far.

Most producers will look next to 'market money' from distributors and sales agents. Icon and Altitude are (re)emerging, but unless a producer attracts the attention of one of the major players – eOne, Lionsgate, Pathé, StudioCanal, Entertainment or, to a lesser degree, Curzon – distribution advances are scarce. A number of UK and international sales agents are offering advances against international rights, but debt financing is not for the cautious. Commercial banks have run away from film as international TV and DVD values slide. Smaller debt financiers exist, but the costs are high.

There are other sources of money – equity and debt funding from facilities; Screen Yorkshire has successfully accessed and invested ERDF funds in exchange for local production investment. Beyond that, and once a budget exceeds £4 million or £5 million, producers need to secure any other equity investment they can find.

Enterprise Investment Schemes – a government-backed plan to encourage UK investment in return for income tax relief – have been the great white hope for film for some time: *Four Lions* and *Moon* were early EIS-backed features. But EIS activity has been somewhat slower than hoped. Nefarious tax avoidance schemes of the past, and recent cases

Producers hunt around for loose change – even in the afterglow of a good year for British film, raising finance is a scramble



What British film needs: Megan Ellison

of high-profile tax fraud, have made 'British film' a grubby word among investors who have plenty of other industries (tech, renewable energy, TV) tugging on their coat pockets.

Only Ingenious, with its sizeable team and large investor base, has managed to raise significant EIS funds; we are recent co-financiers in two sizeable forthcoming projects as part of their slate deal with Pathé: Matthew Warchus's *Pride* and Sarah Gavron's *Suffragette*. We think there might be something we can do to promote EIS to wary investors – at the very least the BFI could lend some credibility to British film, and correct the tarnished view of legitimate tax schemes.

A report at the end of last year, saying only seven per cent of British films turn a profit, fuelled the perception that film is a mug's game. But that awkwardly presented statistic rolled in every micro-, low- and self-financed feature; and the reality is that film investment is a slate business – no smart investor puts all their money on one horse.

What British film really lacks is a Megan Ellison or two. Part-angel, part-enthusiast, part-businesswoman, with huge family wealth at her disposal, Ellison is highly visible on this year's awards circuit as financier and producer of both Spike Jonze's *Her* and David O. Russell's *American Hustle*. She bets on risky projects from the auteurs she loves – though she can offset much of that risk by working with filmmakers who attract bankable talent and by tapping into the Hollywood Studios' global distribution networks.

Unless the British film industry can retain our substantial creative talent and homegrown IP, rather than handing it over to the studios or international distribution networks for upfront fees and elusive royalties, it's unlikely to attract the Ellison kind of investor. The imbalance between the time a producer spends producing and the time they spend raising money will otherwise remain. @bfiben

IN PRODUCTION

● **Matteo Garrone**, the Italian director whose films include *Gomorrah* and *Reality*, is to direct the English-language *The Tale of Tales*, a period fantasy based on three stories from *The Pentamerone*, the 17th-century work by Italian poet and courtier Giambattista Basile. Garrone has reportedly lined up Salma Hayek and Vincent Cassel to star.

● **Amma Asante**, the British director of 2004's *A Way of Life*, and the forthcoming, highly rated period drama *Belle*, has been signed up by Warner Bros to direct *Unforgettable*, a thriller about a woman who is menaced by her husband's ex-wife.

● **Mike Newell** might not be the first name you'd think of when it comes to sci-fi, but the British director of *Four Weddings and a Funeral* and *Donnie Brasco* has reportedly been named as the director of an upcoming adaptation of John Wyndham's classic 1951 science-fiction novel *The Day of the Triffids*. Sam Raimi had first been linked as producer on the project two years ago, but it's unclear if he will still be involved.

● **Stanley Donen** has held a reading of a script he co-wrote with his long-term partner Elaine May. The *Singin' in the Rain* director, who hasn't directed a feature since 1983's *Blame It on Rio* (though he made the TV movie *Love Letters* in 1999) held a reading for private investors with a cast that included Christopher Walken, Jeannie Berlin, Charles Grodin and NYU acting students. May's old professional partner Mike Nichols would apparently produce the comedy, which reportedly concerns a film production on which everything that could go wrong, does go wrong.

● **Jerzy Skolimowski** is to begin shooting what he has described as a "catastrophic thriller" entitled *11 Minutes* in April. No details have yet emerged about the cast or the plot of the film, but the veteran Polish director's project is to be a joint Polish-Irish co-production.

● **Nanni Moretti** (below) is at work shooting his next feature *Mia Madre* in Rome. The Italian director has reportedly cast Margherita Buy, star of Moretti's *The Caiman* and *We Have a Pope*, as a neurotic in the Moretti mould, with the director himself relegated this time to playing Buy's brother.



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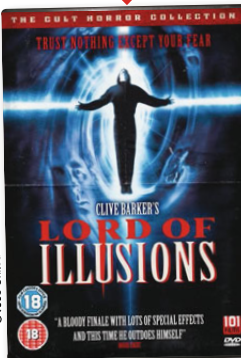


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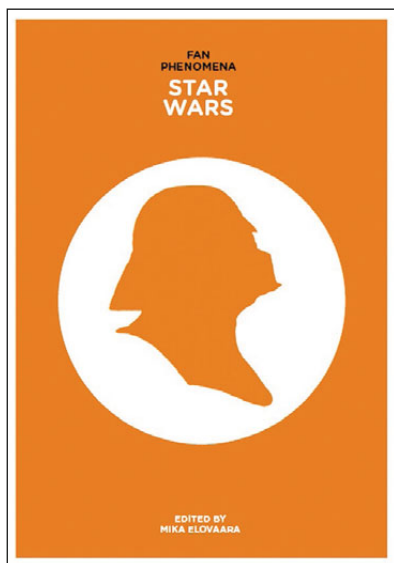
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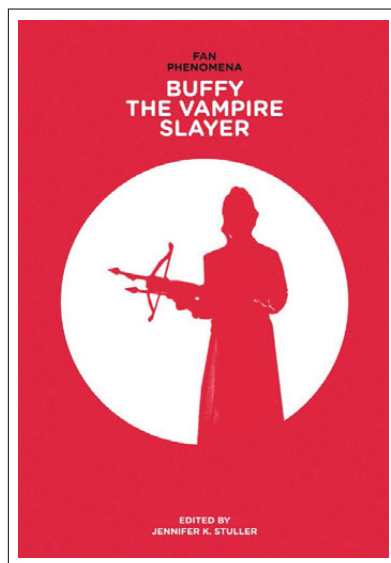
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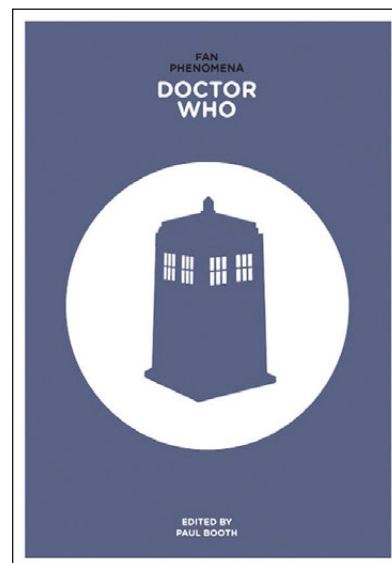
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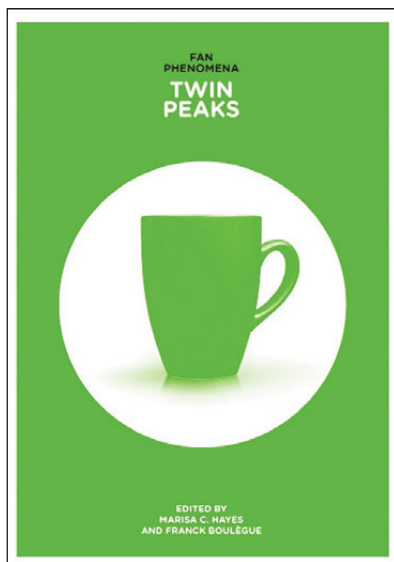
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NIRA PARK

While other British film producers steer clear of comedy, Nira Park of Big Talk is laughing all the way to the bank

By Geoffrey Macnab

Big Talk Productions founder Nira Park is a rarity – a prolific and successful British producer specialising in comedy. But despite having overseen such movies as *Shaun of the Dead*, *Hot Fuzz* and *The World's End*, she still doesn't think the British film industry takes comedy seriously.

"There are so few comedy films made in the UK," she laments. "The majority of the talent is working on television... and Film4 and the BBC, because they don't make many of them, are a bit nervous about comedy. They are nervous about giving notes and about developing. It is not their strength."

Park's latest feature, *Cuban Fury*, was initiated by its star Nick Frost in unlikely fashion. One night, he drunkenly emailed Park with an idea for a movie that would involve him dancing and "wearing a lot of Lycra" – and that would be shot in Miami. Park immediately decided she wanted to make it.

In the film, Frost plays the overweight, underconfident Bruce Garrett, who is struggling to uncover his inner dancer. "[Frost always] liked to dance. At a wedding, drunk, he liked to dance," Park recalls. "He is incredibly nimble and moves well."

It was a condition of the film being greenlit that Frost proved he could handle the dance sequences, and for five months he studied under professional tutors. "He wanted the dancing to be real and he wanted to make the salsa community proud," Park says. "They so wanted him to become a great dancer. They gave so much and he didn't want to fail them."

Park originally set up Big Talk in 1995 with her then husband, comedian Keith Allen, after she worked on *The Comic Strip Presents...* Their first ventures included *Fry's The Limit*,



Comic relief: Nira Park

It's a paradox that the British are renowned for comedy – and yet the British film industry doesn't support the genre

a radio comedy for the BBC in the vein of *Round the Horne*, featuring comedian Stephen Fry; *Hanging Around*, a short drama written and directed by artist Damien Hirst; a pop

promo for Blur's song 'Country House'; and Kim Longinotto's documentary *Rock Wives*.

"We had no furniture. EMI came for a meeting. We had a fax machine and some cushions on the floor," she recalls of the early days of the company. "I thought, 'They're either going to think we're mad or that we're quite cool.'"

The company soon began to prosper, working extensively in television, though it took almost a decade to complete its first feature film, Edgar Wright's *Shaun of the Dead* in 2004. Park soon realised that film "was like a whole other world", and while she has gone on to become the most high-profile female producer of British film comedy since Betty Box of *Doctor in the House* fame in the 1950s, she can't help but draw attention to the paradox that the British are renowned for comedy – and yet the British film industry doesn't support the genre.

She points to her own experiences with *Shaun of the Dead*. In 2002, under its then chief executive Paul Webster, Film4 announced at Cannes that it was supporting *Shaun Of The Dead*. But a few months later, the company set up by Channel 4 as a standalone film operation was closed down.

"When we were trying to get it off the ground after Film4 collapsed, it was hard," she recalls. Other outfits didn't seem willing to pick up the slack. Many said *Shaun* was "too like" TV and too close to Edgar Wright's successful series *Spaced*.

"I don't know if people just read comedy differently and are nervous about it," Park reflects.

Park now runs Big Talk with co-CEO Kenton Allen (a former creative head of BBC Comedy) and managing director Matthew Justice. The company, which has more than 30 staff, was sold to ITV for a reported £12.5 million last summer, and continues to work in both television and film.

Park still works very closely with Wright, Frost and Simon Pegg, and her current film projects include *Man Up*, a romcom with Pegg and Lake Bell; and *Ant-Man*, Wright's big-budget superhero drama backed by Marvel and starring Paul Rudd and Michael Douglas. **S**

i *Cuban Fury* is released on 14 February and is reviewed on page 78

WORD ON THE WIRE FILM CLASSIFICATION

Trying to fathom the reasoning behind the BBFC's guidelines may lead to strong language, mild fantasy violence and threat

By Justin Johnson

New classification guidelines from the British Board of Film Classification come into force on 24 February. As usual, the measures – drawn up in response, apparently, to pressure from parents – seem to reinforce stereotypes of the British as a prudish people whose children need protection from nudity and bad language but whose teenagers can indulge an insatiable appetite for horror and violence. With greater sensitivity to bad language being applied in the U classification, yet more flexibility being applied to the 15 certificate, one might question whether the advisory nature of the 12A certificate shouldn't be extended to the entire system, allowing parents to make informed choices about what their children should see in the cinema, similar to

those they make with other cultural forms.

Some of the best family-oriented gritty dramas made for ten-year-olds by our European neighbours can't be distributed here because of their honest use of language or portrayal of emerging sexuality. With the likes of *Black Swan* and *The Dark Knight* being cited as the catalysts for upgrading 'psychological horror' as a classification concern, one is left wondering if the Child Catcher in *Chitty Chitty Bang Bang* or the flying monkeys in *The Wizard of Oz* might find themselves beyond the reach of children. And with high-quality family films such as *The Selfish Giant* and *Billy Elliot* being certified at 15 – the same rating as many recent horror and war pictures – dissatisfaction with obvious imbalances is likely to continue. **S**



Child Catcher: 18 of the future?

SUNDANCE

AROUND THE WORLD IN 11 DAYS



Heads up: Lenny Abrahamson's *Frank* follows the artistic travails of a musician, loosely inspired by eccentric English rock star Frank Sidebottom

The indie magnet might be famous for its US-focused fare but this year's best films had a truly international flavour

By Eric Kohn

Long considered the symbolic epicentre of modern American cinema, Sundance has retained its brand while quietly broadening it, as evinced by this year's 30th programme in January, in which the majority of the best films in the line-up either came from other countries or otherwise reflected their influence. Ironically, one of the festival's best years in recent memory ranked among its least traditional.

But that's not to say that Sundance shed the domineering cheeriness of the aesthetic so readily associated with it. Even Richard Linklater's *Boyhood*, the universally beloved late addition to the Premieres section, played along. Shot over 12 years as it follows an innocent child (Ellar Coltrane, the first genuine discovery of American acting this decade) as he grows into an inquisitive adult, *Boyhood* trades major plot developments in favour of nuanced, thoughtful exchanges – particularly between the main character, his sister (Linklater's daughter Lorelei) and their divorced father (Ethan Hawke) – over the course of its dozen summers, with a textured quality closer in tone to Olivier Assayas's character studies than any domestic analogue. At the same time, the movie's surface is guided by American indie tropes, from the hand-scrawled opening credits

to music cues ranging from Coldplay to Daft Punk, which subtly indicate the shifting time periods. Yet nobody could deny that *Boyhood* stood out as a towering achievement in experimental storytelling, all the more remarkable for generating so much attention at a festival prized as a beacon for conventional American narratives.

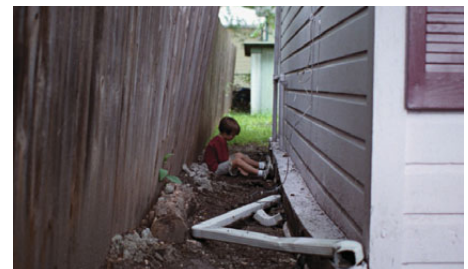
While Sundance's US Grand Jury prize typically singles out a lovable, bittersweet tale – epitomised by recent winners *Like Crazy*, *Beasts of the Southern Wild* and *Fruitvale Station* – this year's victor *Whiplash* provides a contrast. Director Damien Chazelle's follow-up to his delightfully lo-fi musical *Guy and Madeline on a Park Bench* is a sharp-toothed two-hander about a driven college-aged drum student (Miles Teller) facing off against his aggressive instructor (J.K. Simmons, in his first fully realised performance), who spouts hilarious and menacing epithets at every opportunity in a misguided quest to turn his disciple into the next Charlie Parker. Culminating with a snazzy drum solo for the ages, *Whiplash* stands out for evading a coyly sentimental message in favour of unsettling ambiguity – it's a coming-of-age story with unexpected bite.

Even so, *Whiplash* hardly sinks its teeth into the interior anguish of its protagonists like the hipster vampire at the centre of Ana Lily Amirpour's *A Girl Walks Home Alone at Night*, the biggest discovery of this year's programme and the best indication of its transcendence of national barriers. Set in the Iranian ghost town Bad City, with Persian dialect but exclusively shot in California, Amirpour's black-and-white genre mishmash fuses *noir* and gothic elements

with a rockabilly soundtrack, deadpan humour and a transfixing love story with utterly unique results. It's the opposite of a crowdpleaser, but nonetheless succeeds at extracting optimism from overwhelming despair.

A lighter touch was in evidence at the festival too. Irish director Lenny Abrahamson's *Frank*, co-scripted by Jon Ronson and loosely inspired by eccentric English rock star Frank Sidebottom, used the quirky story of a frustrated artist's odyssey to deliver a disarmingly honest look at creative block, with Michael Fassbender in the titular role. *Appropriate Behavior* chronicled the plight of a bisexual Persian-American (writer-director-star Desiree Akhavan) struggling to come out to her parents with thoroughly sharp

Nobody could deny that Richard Linklater's 'Boyhood' stood out as a towering achievement in experimental storytelling



Boyhood

self-deprecating humour. Aaron Katz and Martha Stephens' *Land Ho!*, featuring a pair of ageing men on a meandering road trip across Iceland, managed to swap bland soul-searching for continually witty repartee in the context of a wholly believable quest for meaning.

It was a common complaint that the documentary selection disappointed, but even here one could find plenty of first-rate overseas entries. Chief among these was *Return to Homs* (which won the World Cinema Documentary section), a detailed and morbid look inside the Syrian civil war from the perspective of its insurgents. Also providing a unique perspective on international conflict, *The Black Power Mixtape* director Goran Olsson's *Concerning Violence* resurrected the horrors of African colonialism through footage drawn from Swedish archives, setting it to an analytical anti-colonialist text from the early 60s.

While these movies were marginalised by Sundance's usual star-filled roster, many of the higher profile entries contained innovative or subversive elements that upstaged the weaker movies in the line-up (Zach Braff's obnoxious suburban comedy *Wish I Was Here* and the annoying Gitmo drama *Camp X-Ray* chief among them). More than merely providing a showcase for Jason Schwartzman and Elisabeth Moss, Alex Ross Perry's *Listen Up Philip* paid homage to the neuroses of a Philip Roth novel while energetically picking apart its egotistical young writer protagonist. Moss also surfaced, opposite Mark Duplass, in the quasi-science-fiction relationship comedy *The One I Love*, a clever brain pretzel of a movie from newcomer Charlie McDowell. Meanwhile, Joe Swanberg deepened his stature as a first-rate doodler with *Happy Christmas*, his snapshot of family life disrupted by the arrival of his father character's hard-partying sister (Anna Kendrick). And lest anyone assail the festival for favouring the first-world problems of a particularly whiny race, Justin Simien's persistently sharp college campus satire *Dear White People* put those complaints to rest.

While the fanfare surrounding the 30-year mark may suggest otherwise, Sundance's legacy might be its biggest hurdle: the festival invites expectations of cinema predominantly focused on modern depictions of American society. While those expectations were confirmed by some of the 2014 festival's ingredients, the best of the bunch sublimated them into sophisticated frameworks that tackled ideas indicative of a global village mentality among today's finest filmmakers. The result was the best Sundance in ages, in which preconceived borders fell by the wayside, and the quality spoke for itself. ☺



Whiplash

ROTTERDAM

THE FUTURE IS UNWRITTEN

Despite its successes, the festival needs to address the challenges posed by reduced budgets and dwindling industry influence

By Edward Lawrenson

One of the sidebar programmes at this year's International Film Festival Rotterdam was called 'How to Survive...' Taking a cue from the cataclysmic tenor of big Hollywood movies such as *Gravity* and *Captain Phillips*, it showcased smaller films and digital variations on the theme of disaster. It was a smart selection that revealed the festival's trademark global outlook and commitment to authored, innovative work. Still, it was hard not to detect some mordant irony, presumably unintended, in the strand's title.

These are difficult times for the festival, which may have avoided the extreme cuts that have hit other arts organisations in the Netherlands in the last few years, but is still running on a reduced budget. And while the 12-day event is still well attended, last year did see a drop in audience figures. The vast hub of the festival, the Doelen, did seem more muted this year than in the past. There was a sense too among industry delegates

It's through its support of emerging filmmakers before they are recognised elsewhere that Rotterdam's strength lies

that the festival holds less importance than it once did. If not quite as stark a matter as survival, it's clear that questions about how the festival should meet these challenges face IFFR director Matt Dominicus (standing in for Rutger Wolfson, who is recovering from an illness) and his programmers.

Celebrating the festival's unquestioned successes seems one response to the uncertainties of the present, and this is what programmers did with the 'Mysterious Objects' strand. Marking 25 years of the Hubert Bals Fund, a scheme run in close association with the IFFR to finance projects from developing countries, 'Mysterious Objects' showcased work by filmmakers whose early career the IFFR championed, including Apichatpong Weerasethakul and Elia Suleiman. It's an illustrious legacy, and it's through its support of emerging filmmakers before they are recognised by higher-profile festivals – notably through the official competition Tiger strand's insistence on first and second features – that the IFFR's strength lies. In that sense, it was a solid year. Only two of the films I saw in the Tiger competition were disappointments; the rest were a mix of often remarkable, always intriguing new voices, a pretty good hit rate for a competition predicated on risk and experimentation.

First, the duffs. The documentary *Happily Ever After* told of Amsterdam-based filmmaker



Child of the future: Viktoria

Tatjana Bozic's attempt to understand her troubled relationship with her boyfriend by interviewing her past lovers. It had an amiable watchability but by the standards of most Tigers it was a stylistic hodgepodge. I also struggled with Austrian entrant *My Blind Heart* (*Mein blindes Herz*). A rambling portrait of a Viennese drifter with an incurable genetic disorder, this was a visually overheated indulgence. Whatever his intentions, filmmaker Peter Brunner's hipsterish fascination with characters who were developmentally challenged or had a physical disability left a bad taste.

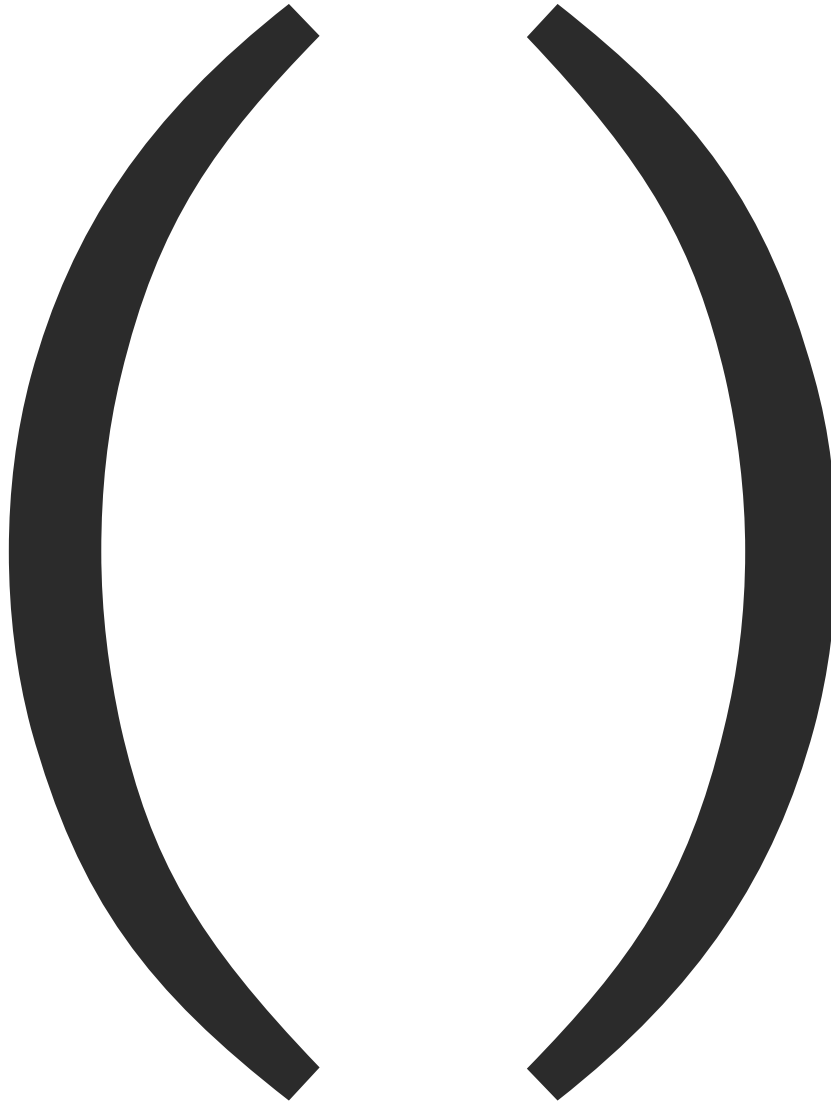
Much better was Lee Chatametkool's *Concrete Clouds*, a gently melancholic tale of a young Thai man returning from New York to face the aftermath of his father's suicide in Bangkok. Lee cut the films of Weerasethakul and 2010 Tiger entrant Anocha Suwichakornpong (who both produce here) and his debut feature displayed some of the subtleties of mood and quietly bold approach to structure that's distinguished some of the films he's edited.

Best known as a producer, Luis Míñar made his feature debut with the Tiger entrant *Falling Star* (*Stella cadente*), an eccentric, absorbing historical drama about an Italian prince, whose brief reign as king in crisis-hit 1870s Spain is spent largely in a near-deserted castle. Filmed with painterly opulence, it is a sideways exploration of political powerlessness that features a performance of lugubrious charm by Alex Brendemühl as the impotent monarch.

Maya Vitkova's *Viktoria* was another slice of European history that flirted with absurdism. The title character is born in Bulgaria in the early 1980s, to a mother who longs to escape to the West. But *Viktoria* is adopted by the communist authorities as 'the child of the future', and grows into a spoilt brat, uncomplainingly indulged by her countryfolk, who have to tolerate far worse under the regime. The two-and-a-half-hour long film can drag, but it rippled with sour irony, moments of deadpan humour and sudden bursts of lyricism.

Also impressive was Natalia Meschaninova's *The Hope Factory*, an honest coming-of-age drama about a teenage woman who longs to escape her factory town in northern Russia. It's an intimate, beautifully performed piece, whose tone of everyday realism is underpinned by a gathering tragic grandeur. ☺

THE STORY OF



Lars von Trier's hugely inventive two-part 'Nymph()maniac' sees him channelling the Marquis de Sade in a complex, absurd and often very funny odyssey of sexual desire. But is its central character any more than an empty vessel for the director to offload his often provocative ideas about women?

By Nick James

In a large meeting hall, a sombre middle-aged woman in a plain blue coat joins the small circle of people in chairs that signifies a self-help group.

"My name is Joe," she says, "and I am a nym-pho-man-i-ac." The voice is fragile but matter of fact. Her downcast eyes seem infinitely world-weary; her face is pinched, as if anticipating hurt.


"Sex addict," offers the sleek-coiffed female group leader. "We say sex addict."

Played by Charlotte Gainsbourg with a downbeat

parsimony, this version of Joe – the adult Joe – is, as you might guess, *Nymph()maniac's* narrator and principal protagonist. Later, on a return visit, she tells the group she is not like them. "I am a nymphomaniac," she says, "and I love myself being one."

Who Joe is and why she is driven to behave as she does is the central conundrum of a multifarious work that's being touted as director Lars von Trier's *magnum opus*. "Haven't they all been?" a cynic might reply, but this really is a film of capacious dimensions





SHE'S GOTTA HAVE IT
Stacy Martin as Joe and
Shia LaBeouf as Jérôme
in Lars von Trier's
*Nymph()**maniac*, which for
commercial reasons has
been split into two, the first
part charting Joe's sexually
voracious youth and the
second exploring her mature
struggle with loneliness

and huge inventiveness, whose current incarnation as two separate feature films of roughly two hours each, *Nymph(M)aniac Volume 1* and *Nymph(M)aniac Volume 2*, have been created for the commercial convenience of distributors and theatres from a single 'director's cut' (which I haven't seen) that lasts for around five and a half hours. The two released volumes split eight chapters into five and three (a division deliberately echoed by von Trier in the number of thrusts in front and from behind with which the young Joe loses her virginity to Jérôme, a young biker played by Shia LaBeouf). The chapters jump about through the various sexual encounters of Joe's life, with *Volume 1* predominantly about her self-pleasuring childhood and sexually voracious youth, and *Volume 2* delineating her mature struggle with loneliness and self-loathing. Together they draw on many of the themes, fascinations and torments that have driven von Trier's films, particularly from *Breaking the Waves* onwards. But do they make Joe a palpable, plausible figure who can fill and justify those vulvic empty brackets that replace the 'o' in the title?

We first encounter the mature Joe lying unconscious on the ground in an alleyway, her face bruised and cut, just as snowflakes start to drift down, soft, lyrical and kitsch. She's found by the genteel Seligman (Stellan Skarsgård), an unworldly Jewish intellectual, who, when she refuses an ambulance, takes her to his apartment and puts her to bed. When he finds her awake, he makes her some tea and begins to ask her about her life, and the conversation they have is what frames the film, as we watch the chapters in flashback, and between times listen to Joe and Seligman debate the true meaning of each.

It's in these flashbacks that we meet the other incarnations of Joe. First, the young Joe already mentioned (played by newcomer Stacy Martin), a suggestible *ingénue* of wide smiles and teasing propositions who embodies a winning sexual keenness and who we see most often in *Volume 1*. Her first adventure, in chapter one, 'The Compleat Angler' (the title of a 16th-century fishing compendium by Izaak Walton), for instance, has her being egged on by a worldly friend to compete for how many men they can fuck during a train journey for the prize of a bag of chocolate sweets. It's played with a mood of coy humour that's slightly redolent of the 1970s British *Confessions of...* films. Seligman's interpretation then gives the story the kind of intellectual gloss often put on softcore moments in erotic French films, explaining that young Joe had lured and caught her men by using the same tactics an experienced angler employs to catch fish. That's the dynamic of the framing conversations: Joe tells a tale designed to demonstrate her depravity, then Seligman draws on his immense autodidactic knowledge of culture to reinterpret the story in a positive light.

It's one of the mainly intellectual pleasures of this complex work that tonally you're never quite sure what (or who) will come next. There's the doting Joe of childhood, who worships her alcoholic father, a romantic who feeds her imagination with his obsession with ash trees (and who tends to get represented in monochrome). Some nymphs of Greek mythology are, of course, tree spirits, which is perhaps why child Joe is instructed to identify with trees. She also experiences a miraculous levitation and vision of the Whore of Babylon and the notoriously promiscuous Roman noblewoman Messa-



Is Joe a palpable, plausible figure who can fill those vulvic empty brackets that replace the 'o' in the title?

lina on either side of her that seems to predict her fate as a slave or mistress of her sex drive. There's an exuberant touch of absurdity to many of these sequences that's genuinely laugh-out-loud funny as no former von Trier film has ever been. At their worst it's as if Peter Greenaway were auditioning for a gag show; at their best they have a sly self-mockery that can hit home several seconds after the moment. And naturally, this being a von Trier work, there are also deeply uncomfortable sequences that the director obviously hopes will appal the audience – as when the mature Joe, having arranged to meet for sex an African street-dealer she's watched from afar, finds he's brought along a pal for a double penetration that – given her slight frame and their prodigious endowments – seems unfeasible and anyway comes to nothing.

The comedy, however offensive, is there partly to counterbalance Joe's degraded view of herself. Every time we return to her battered face in Seligman's single bed, we come back to a form of depression that Seligman the eternal student seems evangelically desperate to ameliorate. Apparently *Nymph(M)aniac* is supposed to be seen as the third part of a 'Depression trilogy' (one should remember here that von Trier has forsworn all contact with the press – his portrait on the film's website shows gaffer tape covering his mouth), following on from *Antichrist* and *Melancholia*, and thereby joins the 'Europe trilogy' (*The Element of Crime*, *Epidemic*, *Europa*), the 'Gold Heart trilogy' (*Breaking the Waves*, *The Idiots*, *Dancer in the Dark*), and the as-yet unfinished 'American trilogy' (*Dogville*, *Manderlay*). "[Trilogies are] like being in a department store and buying three pairs of socks in one pack," he told Stig Björkman in *Trier on von Trier*. "The word 'trilogy' turns into an excuse for concentrating on the same thing once more."



Like all of von Trier's explanations, this should be met with scepticism. One might assume that neatness is a thing with him, that compartmentalising helps him to ameliorate the discursive, needling aspects of his films with dazzling changes of tone, pace and perspective. There are plenty of such switcheroos here that are not to be spoiled by me, yet *Nymph()*maniac's chaptering works as much against clarity as for it. In von Trier's work, the use of chapters and trilogies can end up being evasive, a game of mazes and mirrors. His films are grab-bags of passing ideas that get roped on to established themes as a joke, as much as they are returns to abiding interests – something his new wheeze 'digressionism' (see Jonathan Romney's reviews on pages 86 and 87) only confirms.

Breaking the Waves, *Dogville* and *Nymph()*maniac would, for instance, make as plausible a thematic trilogy as any extant one – albeit not one of consistent style. For, like the innocent Bess in *Breaking the Waves* and the innocent-turned-avenger Grace in *Dogville*, the conception of Joe draws much from the Marquis de Sade's archetypal female protagonists: Justine (the virtuous innocent who meets nothing but cruelty and disaster) and Juliette (Justine's 'wicked' sister whose embrace of corruption leads her to boundless success). Romney's review identifies Joe as closely with Juliette's will-to-pleasure as von Trier himself has identified Bess with Justine's self-sacrifices, but Joe's relationship to Sade's women looks more complicated and ambiguous than that. The modernist French poet Apollinaire declared: "Juliette is... a figure of whom minds [in Sade's time] have as yet no conception, who is rising out of mankind, who shall have wings and who shall renew the world." Seligman tries, near the end of *Nymph()*maniac: Volume 2, to give Joe's life a

PLEASURE AND PAIN
Stacy Martin as young Joe (above left); and Charlotte Gainsbourg as her older incarnation (above), who becomes a client of the sadistic K, played with convincing chilliness by Jamie Bell (below)

similar justification, arguing (somewhat risibly) that her behaviour has been staunchly feminist, but she refuses his fêting of her and continues to talk about herself as a bad person in need of punishment.

Unlike Juliette, Joe does no physical harm to anyone until the film's final chapter, 'The Gun', when she takes a job that uses her vast sexual experience to psychologically coerce people into paying their debts. Mixing a hangdog sense of shame with a talent for doing evil, the mature Joe is more an amalgam of Sade's creations – think how similar her fate is to Bess's self-sacrifice at the end of *Breaking the Waves*. Angela Carter's view of Juliette in her feminist polemic *The Sadeian Woman*, makes a slightly better fit: "By the use of her reason... [Juliette] rids herself of some of the more crippling aspects of femininity; but she is a new woman in the mode of irony." Joe, too, remains "in the mode of irony" as an unreliable narrator. Like Scheherazade in *The Arabian Nights*, or the four prostitutes in Sade's *The 120 Days of Sodom*, Joe survives the film by telling stories, each one seemingly prompted by items and details in Seligman's room – a fishing fly, a plastic duck, a stain that has the shape of a Walther PPK handgun. This triggering from detail irresistibly recalls Keyser Söze from *The Usual Suspects*, which would imply that Joe's stories may be, in the fishing parlance, whoppers, told by a moral monster.

What may further confound our belief in Joe's plausibility is von Trier's chequered history with female protagonists. In her book *Lars von Trier*, Linda Badley claims: "By [the time of] 'Selma's Manifesto' [created for *Dancer in the Dark*]... Trier was openly projecting himself onto female char-





acters as if to ‘perform’ and explore ‘the feminine’. Many if not most feminists would regard this as a pernicious form of displacement... reinstating stereotypes of female victimization and male dominance.” Von Trier himself has said, apropos of Grace’s revenge on the inhabitants of Dogville, “Women are better at embodying and expressing that part of me. The feminine part of me, perhaps! I find it easier to excuse myself and my thoughts if I allow them to be expressed by a woman. If I expressed the same thing through a man, you would only see the brutality and cruelty.”

Brutality and cruelty nonetheless exist in *Nymphomaniac*. There’s a comedic mental cruelty about chapter three, ‘Mrs. H’, in which one of young Joe’s lovers returns to her flat with his bags, having left his wife, only for that wife – a wonderful over-the-top performance of melodramatic anguish at abandonment by Uma Thurman – to arrive with their children and demand to see “the whoring bed”. Physical cruelty manifests particularly in chapter six, ‘The Eastern and the Western Church (The Silent Duck)’. Joe becomes a client of K, a professional sadist (played with a convincingly intense chilliness by Jamie Bell), who names her ‘Fido’ and whose chastisement of her increases in ferocity over her many visits. Her need for K’s whip causes her to neglect the child she bore Jérôme when they re-met and decided to marry, so Jérôme leaves her for good.

I’m jumping around here, as much as von Trier does, to give some sense of the myriad loose threads and odd symbolisms in which the film luxuriates. One thing the film is not, at heart, is overly salacious. Despite its dizzying progress through nudge-nudge softcore, blatant farce and flashes of hardcore (porn actor body doubles were used for all the actual sex acts we glimpse, of which there are said to be more in the five-and-a-half-hour version), it’s as a rich intellectual and stylistic conceit – an absorbing, stimulating art film – that it best succeeds.

What one may assume is that Joe’s stories and their reinterpretation by Seligman represent von Trier arguing with himself. For me, von Trier’s harking back to Sade seems like a symptom of a desire to be at the heart of debates about misogyny. Linda Badley has proposed that von Trier’s use of Sade might be seen as a fulfilment

‘I find it easier to excuse my thoughts if I allow them to be expressed by a woman. If I expressed the same thing as a man, you would only see the brutality’

ADDICTED TO LOVE
Stacy Martin as Joe and Sophie Kennedy Clark as her friend B on a mission to seduce men on a train (above); old flames Jérôme and Joe meet unexpectedly at work, while Felicity Gilbert’s Liz looks on (below)

of Angela Carter’s call for a “moral pornographer [who] might use pornography as a critique of current relations between the sexes. His business would be the total demystification of the flesh and the subsequent revelation, through the infinite modulations of the sexual act, of the real relations between man and his kind... he might begin to penetrate to the heart of the contempt for women that distorts our culture even as he entered the realms of true obscenity as he describes it.” But too much of the concept of nymphomania here – deliberately presented to flout modern conceptions of ‘sex addiction’ (and, by extension, to sideswipe Steve McQueen’s *Shame*) – seems to draw on 19th-century ideas about sex and insatiable women that can be traced back to Baudelaire’s collection of poems devoted to lesbians and prostitutes, *The Flowers of Evil*, and his belief that “the unique and supreme pleasure of making love lies in the certitude of doing evil”. As Baudelaire scholar James McGowan has it: “His lovers are presented as adventurers into the unknown, explorers of forbidden love, ‘seekers of the infinite’, driven by overwhelming passion... They suffer the condemnation of men and God and, more than that, the lacerations of passion itself.”

But sexual politics aside, what counts most, perhaps, is what emotion we’re left with at the end of the film. I felt an overwhelming melancholy that justifies *Nymphomaniac*’s place in the ‘Depression trilogy’. Not the sadness of post coitus but a sympathy for Joe, this harrowed figure so stoically put together by Gainsbourg, who – despite her defiance in the sex addiction group scene I described at the beginning – seems lumbered as much by von Trier’s need to confound all rational motives and mind-dump his ideas of ‘femaleness’ onto her as she is by the rigours an unquenchable desire may have put her through. Joe’s stance of telling truth to hypocrisy, for instance, is of course von Trier’s own tribute to his rebellious nature, the part of him that refuses to abandon the worldview of the angry teenager. But since she is unreliable, you can’t altogether trust her, any more than you can trust von Trier. What’s between the brackets in the title, therefore, is whatever you want to be there.

i *Nymphomaniac* Volume 1 and Volume 2 are released in the UK on 22 February and are reviewed on pages 86 and 87



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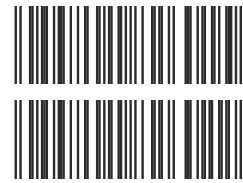


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STUDIOCANAL

DEAD CALM

The winner of the Un Certain Regard Best Director award at Cannes, French filmmaker Alain Guiraudie has revamped the sullied reputation of erotic thrillers with 'Stranger by the Lake', a tense tale of obsession that boasts one of the most memorable screen murders in years

By Catherine Bray

Mention the sub-genre 'erotic thriller' and the writers and directors that spring to mind are people like Joe Eszterhas, Adrian Lyne, Paul Verhoeven and maybe Brian De Palma. We can now add to their ranks French filmmaker Alain Guiraudie – but where the likes of *9 ½ Weeks* (1985), *Basic Instinct* (1992), *Showgirls* (1995) or *Passion* (2012) offer what we might call qualified pleasures, Guiraudie's *Stranger by the Lake* (*L'Inconnu du lac*) can boast integrity and psychological insight as well as titillation. At Cannes last year, as De Palma's ill-fated *Passion* hustled for buyers, *Stranger by the Lake* screened in the Un Certain Regard strand, where it found critics falling over themselves to praise it as a heady homoerotic mood piece, at once a compellingly perverse murder mystery and an astute dissection of the micro-politics of a gay cruising hotspot.

Born in 1964, Guiraudie is a genial presence who has directed ten films (including shorts and a TV movie) since 1990 without getting much notice. If *Stranger by the Lake* is unlikely to compete at the box office with the gaudy run of erotic thrillers listed above, on the global stage it has shown Guiraudie to be an auteur to be reckoned with. Not long after the interview below took place on the Croisette, Guiraudie would win the strand's Best Director prize for the film, which he says is an overdue attempt to honestly confront his own sexuality from within the framework of an arthouse thriller.

The film opens with a static shot of a makeshift car park – really just a clearing in a forest where the road ends. As another car joins the half-dozen already parked, there is a sense of the working day just beginning. The new vehicle belongs to Franck (Pierre Deladonchamps), who strolls through the trees to a beach where he exchanges perfunctory small talk with one of the nude men already stretched out on the beach for the day's sunbathing, swimming and shagging. This shot of the car park is a recurring motif that tracks the darkening mood of the film, as it moves from a tartly observed and occasionally comic depiction of the cruisers' sexual freedom, through to the madness of desire, danger and death.

The film's first significant conversation occurs when tubby loner Henri (Patrick d'Assumção) warns Franck of a 15-foot catfish he says lives in the lake. Franck scoffs at the possibility that such a dangerous monster could be living undetected beneath the surface of this tranquil paradise, but soon finds a different peril may be lurking nearby when he falls for handsome alpha-cruiser Michel (Christophe Paou), a keen swimmer with a dark secret.

Stranger by the Lake features one of the most memorable murder scenes of recent times. Spied on by both Franck and the audience from a distance of perhaps 200 metres, we can't see the faces involved, nor is there any gore – it is accomplished as quickly as snuffing out a

candle. Michel is simply bored of his latest playmate and, being the stronger swimmer, finds it easy to hold him under the water some distance from shore. It happens so easily that it almost takes on the quality of a daydream.

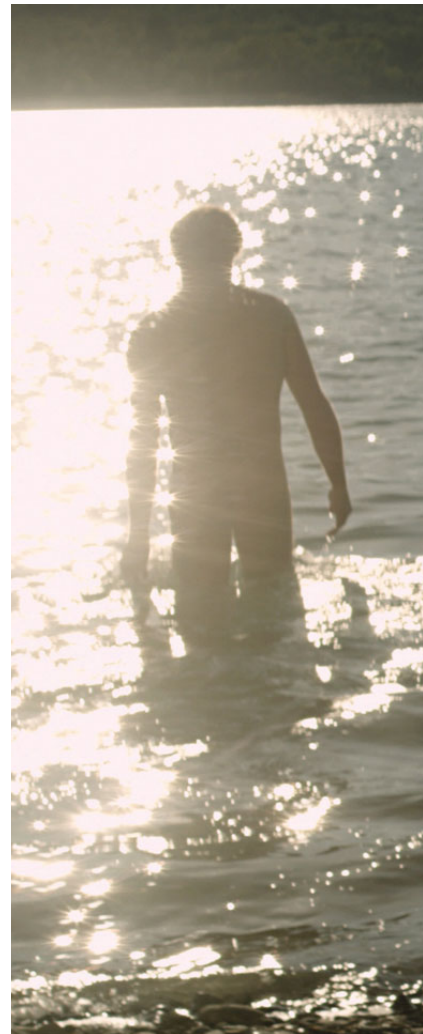
Michel seems unaware of or indifferent to the visibility of his crime. Possibly the lake and its environs, with its brutally Darwinian hierarchy of attraction and rejection, and its openly transgressive attitude to performing sex acts in public, allow Michel's psychopathy to flourish unselfconsciously – but what's refreshing is that despite providing the ideal hiding place for a murderer, Guiraudie never condemns the environment that conceals him. He leaves that to the gently comic figure of a detective investigating the death, with whom we aren't invited to identify.

This isn't a conventional whodunnit murder mystery. It's not even a whydunnit – Michel's motives are never laid bare. It is Franck's response and the love story that follows which for Guiraudie form the spine of the tale; when we talked, he was less interested in questions about the possible self-destructive nature of Franck's actions than he was in the obsessive love or desire that drives the slender but tightly controlled narrative.

Catherine Bray: Is it fair to say that *Stranger by the Lake* is about the self-destructive side of love?

Alain Guiraudie: To me it's not so much about the self-destruction. I see it more in the traditional romantic view – romanticism in the sense that one wants to explore and go to the end with a partner and experience as much as one can, even if it involves transgression, even if it involves risks. It's about passion, it's about going as far as one can, into death. But it's true that since the arrival of Aids, that fact of wanting to go to the end with that dramatic passionate love, and experience as much as possible, may have destructive elements.

FATAL ATTRACTION?
Director Alain Guiraudie (below) wanted honestly to confront his sexuality in *Stranger by the Lake* (above) and to explore the idea of what it is to be obsessively in love



GETTY IMAGES (2)



CB: The look of the two actors who play Michel and Franck contrast and complement each other well – did you have a physical type in mind when casting?

AG: When you are writing your script you have these characters in mind and you can see them in your mind's eye. And when it comes to looking for these characters and casting actors in your film, I am always disappointed. I always think to myself, "I'll never find the right people... they'll never correspond to what I'm looking for." If I were to travel around the world and meet everyone I would never find the person I'm looking for. But with the character of Franck, who is a bit of an alter ego, I was looking for someone who is like me, and for the character of Michel I was looking for a handsome Californian surfer who is modern but has a mysterious dark side to him. Christophe and Pierre were so far above everyone else I saw during casting; they were the best actors I could find for the roles.

CB: Why did you choose to make this film at this point in your career?

AG: I had never really confronted in the past my own sexuality, no doubt because of my sense of modesty, of shame, or of shyness, and it was really important that I grapple with that. But I'd also wanted to confront what it is to be in love. I'd always portrayed love in a lighter mode, dealing with friendship or flirtation. I wanted to confront what it is to be obsessed, to be madly head over heels in love.

CB: Most reviews have mentioned the sex scenes. What was your approach to filming those – were they choreographed in advance or developed more organically?

AG: In the script, I wasn't as explicit or detailed as we were on film. I didn't say exactly what I was going to show. I knew there would be explicit sex scenes in the film, and those would be something that we developed during rehearsals. From the start, it was clear to me that I wasn't going to ask my actors to go all the way in these sex scenes and that I would call on body doubles. I didn't want to cast porn stars – on the contrary I cast real actors whose physique was similar to the actors themselves. The idea was to link and make as seamless a transition as possible from the kisses and embraces of the actors themselves into the sexually explicit scenes with those shots which are framed more on that part of the body.

CB: Did you have any trouble finding the right extras to play the men who frequent the lake?

AG: The nudists that you see on screen, not all of them are actors. The non-speaking parts, most of them were real nudists. I was looking for men who were not only comfortable being nude on camera but who were comfortable with that homosexual cruising milieu. I wanted to capture in this single microcosm as many of the different types of individuals that exist in that world as possible. In San Francisco or France in the 1970s where I used to go, there were men who used to be able to have as many as 20 men in a single day. I want to know their secret!

CB: Finally, I have to ask – how did you shoot the murder?

AG: Thank you for asking that. We shot the murder by using a scuba diver – he went down for a very long time and swam out of the frame. But he's alive and well!

i **Stranger by the Lake** is released in the UK on 21 February and is reviewed on page 76

'One wants to go to the end with a partner, even if it involves transgression, even if it involves risks. It's about passion, it's about going as far as one can'





PHOTOGRAPH BY KEVIN SCANLON

The spirit of Ernst Lubitsch lives on in Wes Anderson's fast-quipping screwball caper 'The Grand Budapest Hotel', a chase extravaganza set over several decades in a fictional Eastern European country. Here, the director talks about the writing process, how he maintained the plot's frantic pace and why sadness and tragedy haunt the film's atmosphere

By Isabel Stevens

"How would Lubitsch do it?" was a prompt that Billy Wilder had framed and hung over his desk in ornate calligraphy by Saul Bass. If there's one director working today who might have the same motto displayed in his office, it is Wes Anderson.

The influence of Ernst Lubitsch – along with Alfred Hitchcock and J.D. Salinger – loom large over the films of Anderson, a director who works somewhat like the giant of the studio era. Well known for his industrious pre-planning, he storyboards all his movies; has a penchant for intricate staging, madcap scenarios and imaginary worlds infused with opulence and artifice; and he likes to marshal the power of an ensemble cast. Like Lubitsch, he writes screenplays that prioritise wit and charm and his flawed but endearing fast-quipping protagonists – from Rushmore's Max to the 'Fantastic' Mr. Fox – are bundles of energy his films are in a rush to keep up with.

The Grand Budapest Hotel, Anderson's latest, is a screwball comedy chase extravaganza and his most Lubitsch-like film yet. Set in the fictional Eastern European country of Zubrowka (recalling the Marshovia and Sylvania of Lubitsch-land) as World War II breaks out, it centres, naturally, on a palatial hotel (one similar to the plush Hotel Clarence in 1939's *Ninotchka*) and the escapades of its debonair concierge. Monsieur "I go to bed with all my friends" Gustave (Ralph Fiennes) has that scandalous pre-code air about him, with the friends in question being his adoring, wealthy, elderly female guests. As with Lubitsch, the convoluted plot here comes second to the thrill and ingenuity of the ride: M. Gustave is on the run with his teenage lobby-boy sidekick Zero Moustafa (newcomer Tony Revolori) after inheriting a priceless painting from 'friend' Madame D (Tilda Swinton), who has clearly been offed by her greedy son Dmitri (Adrien Brody). Aided by his henchman (Willem Dafoe) and a band of Nazi soldiers (led by Edward Norton), Dmitri is after Gustave, who in turn is trying to find Dmitri's butler, Serge X. (Mathieu Amalric), who knows the truth behind the whole affair. In the meantime Gustave has lifted the painting from under Dmitri's nose, just as any light-fingered charmer from a 30s romantic comedy might.

When I arrive to interview Anderson at his surprisingly sparsely decorated but unsurprisingly immaculate Paris office, there is no Lubitsch sign – which



THE ANDERSON TOUCH

CANDID CAMERA

'There are a thousand ways to point a camera, but really only one,' was a Lubitsch maxim that Wes Anderson (above), whose camera is permanently fixed at right-angles to the action in *The Grand Budapest Hotel* (left), would no doubt endorse

one might have imagined would be written in his beloved Futura, a font used for the titles in all his films until he substituted it with a custom typeface in *Moonrise Kingdom* and with Archer in *The Grand Budapest Hotel*. Paintings and books – the objects his characters love most and which are always more than mere props – are also nowhere to be seen. The only clue that this apartment belongs to the inventor of such delectable illusions is a baby pink Mendl's confectionery box resting on the mantelpiece, eye candy that comes in useful in *The Grand Budapest Hotel* when Gustave needs to break out of prison and that wouldn't look out of place in Matuschek & Co's window in Lubitsch's *The Shop Around the Corner*.

In a self-reflexive nod, the film begins with an author (Tom Wilkinson) ruminating on the subject of the imagination, declaring that ideas “never come out of thin air”, and that characters and events are inspired by the people and situations one experiences in life. “What I’m going to do normally takes shape when I have more than one idea mixing together,” says Anderson. “Usually the ideas have nothing to do with each other. In this case I was interested in doing a European story set at that time and which had a ‘Europe on the Hollywood backlot’ feel to it. I had this character in mind and then there was a short story that Hugo [Guinness, a graphic novelist] and I had been working on together. And I just mixed them. That’s when I thought, ‘There’s a movie in this.’”

It’s become a truism that each Anderson film is more in love with storytelling than the last. With its Russian doll structure and the WWII caper relayed to us via two narrators, *The Grand Budapest Hotel* tops them all. This complex framework for the story was borrowed from Austrian writer Stefan Zweig, whose distancing structures Anderson has admired ever since he first read him eight years ago. “The story has nothing to do with Zweig,” says the director, “but the frame for the film comes directly from his only novel *Beware of Pity*. There’s an introduction which is very similar to what Tom Wilkinson says [in the film]. Then it flashes back with the author as a character [played in the film by Jude Law] who meets someone [E. Murray Abraham’s elderly, lonely Zero in the now faded hotel of the 1960s] who eventually tells him the story of the whole book. I don’t know at what point it ceases to be Zweig and becomes a fictional version of him.” Never one for straight appropriation, Anderson adds a further layer with the film’s opening scene in which a girl looking at a statue of M. Gustave in the park is also reading the author’s book about the dandy concierge. “When I read *Beware of Pity*,” says Anderson, “I happened to be walking in the Luxembourg Gardens here in Paris and found a sort of abandoned bronze of Zweig.”

M. Gustave will seem a familiarly Lubitschian creation to many: utterly unflappable, he seduces and controls ladies with all the ease and charm of Maurice Chevalier in *The Merry Widow* or *The Smiling Lieutenant*, even chiding them on their make-up choices as Herbert Marshall’s Gaston does to Mme Colet in *Trouble in Paradise*. But Anderson insists that the poetry-quoting, perfume-loving character is more closely modelled on someone he and Guinness know personally. He had Fiennes – not well-known for his comic roles – in mind before even starting the script: “Seeing him on stage in [Yasmina Reza’s satire] *God of Carnage*, he was so great and funny, he was a reason alone to make the movie”.

Ever since he penned his debut, *Bottle Rocket*, with Owen Wilson, Anderson has chosen to co-write his scripts with others: “I like writing with friends. It’s usually a matter of talking through the story with them. Then I do most of the actual physical writing myself separately.” Crafting the dialogue and Gustave’s poetry, he says, was one of the most enjoyable elements this time – as was dreaming up the characters’ elaborate names. “I like to have a good name for a character,” he says. “It’s something to latch on to. You can sometimes make the character live up to the name”.

The final story was not sketched out from the start: “I don’t always have a plan about what’s going to happen next. It sort of just happens spontaneously when I’m making it up. But often I do have some scene or part of a scene or a section of dialogue... that’s waiting somewhere but I don’t know where it’s going to go. And at some point I realise where that fits. Usually it feels like somebody [else] has the grand design for this whole thing and I’m waiting for them to tell me, but no one does. It is conceivable that if I could be hypnotised early in the process that I could give you an outline of the movie, but I’m certainly not in touch with it until it happens.”

LAWS AND DISORDER

In the mid-1920s, novelist Vicki Baum worked undercover as a chambermaid in two famous Berlin hotels to gather material for her book *Menschen im Hotel*, which in turn became the basis for Edmund Goulding’s 1932 film *Grand Hotel*. Anderson didn’t go that far when researching M. Gustave but got very interested in hotels. “If I have a character that I’ve latched on to,” he says, “I start to be interested in whatever they’re interested in. I travelled around Europe trying to get backstage and I met a few [concierges].”

Like the prestigious Rushmore Academy, the animal world in *Fantastic Mr. Fox* or scout life in *Moonrise Kingdom*, the *Grand Budapest Hotel* is a universe of strict rules and secret codes that contrast starkly with the gleeful mayhem that ensues. Another useful research tool was the memoir *Hotel Bemelmans* by Ludwig Bemelmans, the Austro-Hungarian writer of the Madeline children’s books who grew up in the Budapest hotel his father managed.

The hotel becomes more of a character than any of his prior locations. Its extravagant interior and colour scheme are revamped three times during the film: purple and red in the art deco 1920s period; a sugary pink and grey in the Nazi era; orange and green in the 1960s. Reflecting historical changes in the hotel’s design wasn’t part of the script, but came from time spent investigating locations. “Hotels have changed so radically since that period. We had to create our own as the one we were looking for didn’t exist and because we had gathered so many ideas we wanted to get in. There was one particular resource we used: the Library of Congress’s huge collection of photochromes of landscapes and cityscapes from the Austro-Hungarian Empire and Prussia – black-and-white photos from 1885 to 1910 that were colourised and mass-produced. I compare it to Google Earth of 1900. It’s quite amazing and you can just peruse them online.”

Meanwhile the state of Zubrowka was inspired by the director’s thoughts about the many Eastern Europeans and Germans working in Hollywood in the 30s. “I was as influenced by the Hollywood idea of

Like the Rushmore Academy or scout life in ‘Moonrise Kingdom’, the Grand Budapest Hotel is a universe of strict rules that contrast starkly with the mayhem that ensues

ROGUES’ GALLERY
(Clockwise from top left)
Adrien Brody as Dmitri,
Tilda Swinton as Madame D.,
Edward Norton as Henckels,
Jeff Goldblum as Kovacs,
Willem Dafoe as Jopling,
Tony Revolori as Zero,
Mathieu Amalric as Serge,
Bill Murray as Monsieur Ivan



the interpretation of that culture as I was by the real one," he says. In contrast to Lubitsch's fondness for studios – summed up in his quip, "I've been to Paris, France, and I've been to Paris, Paramount. I think I prefer Paris, Paramount..." – Anderson always has his doll-house-style sets built on location. "I like artificial things in real places," he says. Zubrowka was constructed in Görlitz, a small city on the border between Poland and Germany, close to the Czech republic. "It's a place that is in a bit of a time warp. There's lots of abandoned buildings. But the old middle Europe is still there. We worked at a prison in a nearby city and we did a bit in Dresden but we discovered everything we needed in a very small space and then we adapted things. I like that way of working. It makes a huge difference if the cast and crew can live together. You don't leave the world of the movie."

The frantic pace of the action and dialogue was another element influenced by Lubitsch – and Billy Wilder too. "I hope it isn't too fast, too overwhelming," says Anderson. "I like to make short films. Not including the end titles, this one is 94 minutes, but this is a long story. It's a 30s film thing to have them talk very fast. Most people when you ask them to talk fast, it turns into mush. But Ralph [Fiennes] has such clarity in his diction. I was pushing him faster than he had ever attempted but it was one of the most exciting things to watch him play these scenes. There was something in the way we wrote the dialogue – it's not good if it's not fast. The part of the movie that's set in the 30s has a different pace to the part that's set in the 60s. That's gently paced and more melancholic. As soon as they start talking in the 30s, they accelerate."

This effort to demarcate each era was important for Anderson. "We tried to make as much of a distinction as possible between the different shifts in the story," he says. In addition to the hotel design, the pacing and Anderson's signature intertitles announcing the many acts and leaps in time, he filmed each era in a different aspect ratio: 1.85:1 for the scenes set in something like the present, 2.35:1 for the 60s and – staying faithful to the proportions of films of that time – academy ratio for the 20s, new terrain for Anderson, who normally chooses to squeeze as much as possible into a wide screen. But the vertical nature of the academy format appealed, and the fact that it echoes "the natural shape of the movie negative".

LIGHTS, CAMERA, ACTION

The film's many ingenious action sequences, however, owe more to Hitchcock than Lubitsch – including a museum chase Anderson says he lifted directly from *Torn Curtain*.

Like *North by Northwest*, *The Grand Budapest Hotel* is constantly on the move, and in the rare moments it stops for breath – in typical break-the-fourth-wall Anderson mode – it's just at the moment when the villains are on to our heroes. But the director takes Hitchcock's love of transportation to an extreme. In their exploits, Gustave and co use trains, a bus, a funicular railway, skis, lifts, a dumb waiter and in one marvellously convoluted travelling sequence, multiple cable cars. "It's not from one movie or another," says Anderson of the aerial scenes in which Gustave and Zero search for Serge in the mountains. "But I thought it could be from a silent movie, or 30s Hitchcock maybe. That sequence we could even do with a title card and it wouldn't slow it down much."



KOBAL COLLECTION (C)

A common complaint about Anderson's films is that they're all the same, set in similar hermetic child-like worlds. *The Grand Budapest Hotel* does contain all the Andersonian tropes, from fetishised uniforms (look out for the purple socks) to Gustave and Zero's mentor/protégé relationship, but the WWII backdrop brings a new dimension, involving tragedy on a much larger scale than in any of his previous films. "The movie is a comedy, an adventure, but another key inspiration was *Eichmann in Jerusalem* by Hannah Arendt and her analysis of how the many occupied countries in Europe responded to the Nazis' demands." The film has plenty of cartoonish punches and over-the-top severed body parts, but the Nazis' treatment of paperless immigrant Zero is captured by Anderson with a sense of real menace.

Normally Anderson's comedies swerve to a halt when their formal *joie de vivre* clashes with their melancholy subject matter. In the final scenes here though, Anderson swaps his bright, multicoloured palette for a sombre black and white. "I couldn't give you a proper explanation," he says of the abrupt change. "If someone asked me why when we were shooting, I would want to leave it that way but I wouldn't be able to make a case for it. It's just what felt right."

Andrew Sarris interpreted the 'Lubitsch touch' as "a counterpoint of poignant sadness during a film's gayest moments". In Anderson's adventures, sadness surfaces in the most unexpected places and *The Grand Budapest Hotel* recalls the shifts in tone in Lubitsch's war farce *To Be or Not to Be* or the way suicide is dealt with amid the romance of *The Shop Around the Corner*. When the commotion of the caper is over, the film's ending is Anderson's bleakest since Owen Wilson's Dignan walked away from his friends and into prison in *Bottle Rocket*. So did he set out to make a grimmer film this time? "No. At a certain point when we were working on the story we asked ourselves if this was what we were going to do, but there didn't seem any other way for it to end."

People sticking together is always of the upmost importance in Anderson's films. "Take your hands off my lobby boy," is Gustave's call to arms in a buddy movie shattered by the war. Zero, alone in middle age, reminiscing about his lost adolescent love and reliving the past in his lobby-boy quarters, surely suffers the worst fate of any of Anderson's engaging misfits yet.



The Grand Budapest Hotel is released on 7 March and is reviewed on page 81

'The movie is a comedy, an adventure, but another key inspiration was Eichmann in Jerusalem by Hannah Arendt'

PARADISE REGAINED
Echoes of Anderson's Monsieur Gustave character can be found in Lubitsch's *Trouble in Paradise* (above), which was rereleased on DVD by Criterion with a sketch of Lubitsch by Anderson (below)



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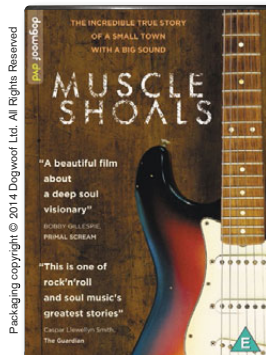
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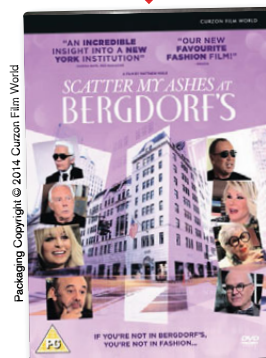
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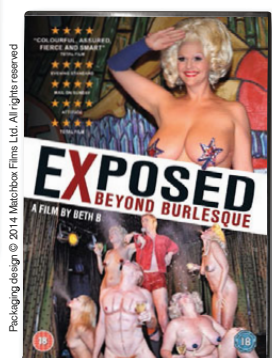


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INTRUDER IN THE DUST

Ted Kotcheff's cult classic *'Wake in Fright'* is a brutal exploration of masculinity and violence in the Australian outback. Here, the director explains why it took a seven-year search for the missing negative to bring it back for a new generation

By Clare Stewart

Decades of dust have been blown off Ted Kotcheff's *Wake in Fright* (1971), revealing it to be a brilliant, existential mind-bender that makes compelling visual and dramatic use of its scorching Australian outback setting and its gallery of hell-bent characters. Though little seen prior to its restoration by Australia's National Film and Sound Archive (completed in 2009 after a painstaking search for the missing negative), *Wake in Fright* had already achieved legendary cult status. It was remembered for its audacious filmmaking and recognised for its germinal influence on the Australian 70s New Wave (a young Peter Weir was an observer on the shoot, and Bruce Beresford and Fred Schepisi have both cited its influence) as well as the 'Ozploitation' cycle fêted by Quentin Tarantino in the documentary *Not Quite Hollywood*. It also ranks with Nicolas Roeg's *Walkabout* and Michael Powell's *They're a Weird Mob* among the best Australian films to be made by an 'outsider' director.

Based on Australian journalist and author Kenneth Cook's unrelenting 1961 novel, the action revolves around urbane schoolteacher John Grant (Gary Bond), posted in an outback town, who stops over in Bundanyabba (a mining settlement in the middle of nowhere) en route home to Sydney for the school holidays. Blatantly disdainful of the feral

'Yabba locals, Grant is nonetheless seduced into a mindless backroom game of 'Two-up', seeing a chance to win the money he needs to pay off his bond to the education department so that he can permanently return to 'civilisation'. What ensues after the dubious 'Yabba cop (famed Australian character actor Chips Rafferty in his last role) leads Grant off-track, is a booze-fuelled gambling binge that rapidly descends into violence, degradation and self-loathing. When he wakes up broke, an overfriendly local (Al Thomas) takes him home, leading to a frigid encounter with that man's sullen, over-sexed daughter (Sylvia Kay, Kotcheff's then wife). He ends up under the influence of Doc Tydon (Donald Pleasence) a freaky, unregistered alcoholic doctor, who dispenses philosophy and (most likely) Benzedrine for the salvation of others. Grant's masculinity is challenged (Jack Thompson, in his first role, plays the bloke who wonders, "What's the matter with him? Rather talk with a woman than have a drink?") and he reluctantly sets out on a kangaroo shoot that rapidly spirals out of control.

The film's original title is sourced from the old curse that opens Cook's novel, "May you dream of the devil and wake in fright". Embedded in both the novel and the film's story structure is the horror of waking up to discover that the delirious, unhinged

nightmare was not a dream (as John Grant realises when he awakes beside Doc Tydon). Kotcheff explains, "I knew what I wanted to do. The subject matter was so strong. Here you have this character, a sensitive, educated man who succumbs to the dark shadow inside of his own nature. And it's an education. He discovers that his sense of superiority is unwarranted. He does things he never dreamed of to prove his virility. He becomes one of them. And he discovers that we are all in the same bloody existential boat together." The hellishness Grant awakes to is presided over by the good doctor, who could be Lucifer incarnate or another one of the devil's dupes. His agency in Grant's descent is as foul as the stench of his own moral surrender; however, the possibility that Doc Tydon, an intelligent man derailed, could once have been a fellow like Grant, is the film's restless and ever-present spectre.

Wake in Fright's powerful setting, its vivid portrayal of the dusty, desolate outback and its menacing, hyper-masculine underbelly were translated direct from Cook's novel for the screen by Jamaican-born Brit Evan Jones (who didn't set foot on Australian soil until a decade or so after the film's production). Dirk Bogarde first optioned the rights to the novel shortly after it was published with the intent that Joseph Losey direct. It was Jones, who had worked with Losey on several films (including *The Damned* and *King & Country*), who brought the book to Kotcheff some years later. Kotcheff (who started out in Canadian TV and would go on to direct *First Blood* and *Weekend at Bernie's*) had been working for the BBC in London and he and Jones had just finished the feature *Two Gentlemen Sharing*, an odd-couple interracial drama.

In conversation, Kotcheff is director as raconteur, relishing telling a good yarn and using every anecdote to contextualise aspects of the film. Describing a location visit to Broken Hill where the film's exteriors are shot, he says: "I walked in [to one remote pub] and 40 pairs of drunken eyes looked at me. The whole room went quiet. It was



DESERT FURY
In *Wake in Fright*, Gary Bond plays outback schoolteacher John Grant (left) who finds events spinning out of his control after he stops in a small mining settlement, where he meets Donald Pleasence's Doc Tydon (above right)



'You have this character, a sensitive, educated man who succumbs to the dark shadow inside of his own nature. And it's an education. He does things he never dreamed of to prove his virility'

like a scene out of a John Ford western. I crossed the bar and ordered a schooner of ale. This guy kept looking at me, at my [long] hair. 'Shhiitt...' Then he looked at my [handlebar] moustache. 'Shhiiitt'. Then finally, he said: 'Hello, Stalin'. He stuck his jaw right out at me. 'I said, hello, Stalin'..."

Kotcheff defused this situation (which could have come straight from the film) with humour, but it informed his approach to the brutal and eroticised fight scene that breaks up the film's notorious kangaroo hunt sequences. "These guys were sticking their necks out right at me. And what I realised was, they didn't want to hit me, they wanted me to hit them. In Broken Hill, the men outnumbered women three to one... in the absence of women and with the desire for human touch, hitting was the way of being touched." Like two significant films that would soon follow it – *Deliverance* (1972) and *Scarecrow* (1973) – *Wake in Fright* goes all the way, from overt displays of machismo to male rape.

Pleasence's role as Doc Tydon is pivotal, as both observer and protagonist, and he gives an intoxicatingly deranged performance. "Don was a friend," explains Kotcheff. "I'd seen him first in the Harold Pinter play *The Caretaker*, and then I cast him in a television play I directed for the BBC back in the 60s.

His performance is absolutely amazing. Wonderful man, great sense of humour. The only time there was a problem was the scene where he gets drunk and is talking to John Grant and calling him Socrates: 'I cannot accept your premise, Socrates... The aim of what you call civilisation is a man in a smoking jacket, whisky and cider, pressing a button... to destroy a planet a billion miles away, kill a billion people he's never seen.'" Pleasence approached the director to say he couldn't do the scene unless he got drunk. Continues Kotcheff: "I said, 'Come on Don, you are one of the best actors around, don't give me that crap, you need to get drunk! That's ridiculous.' He insisted. 'Ted, there is kind of a madness that alcohol produces, I can't reproduce that madness without drinking.'" Kotcheff insisted Pleasence do it sober. "So we shot it. At the dailies the next day, I said, 'You know what, Don? You're right, you didn't get there. What kind of whisky would you like?'"

This no-holds-barred approach to filming was taken to its most extreme for the confronting kangaroo hunt sequence. "What gave me the most difficulty was the kangaroo hunt, for obvious reasons. I am a vegetarian. I have never got inside the head of someone who kills animals for pleasure. To kill an animal for a film is unthinkable."





WILD AT HEART
Donald Pleasence as Doc Tydon during a gambling session in *Wake in Fright* (far left), an event that marks the start of John Grant's descent into hell, culminating in a savage kangaroo hunt (left)

◀ This is long before we had CGI. I was airing my concerns about it and one of the crew members said, 'You do know, Ted, that they kill 300 kangaroos in the outback every night for the pet food market in America?'... So we went out with [the hunters] over several nights. They hunted exactly the way I shot the film. They had a spotlight, which hypnotised the kangaroos. They sat inside the truck, which had a retractable windscreen, and they'd rest their guns on the dashboard. The light would hypnotise the kangaroos and then they'd shoot them. When I first showed our executive producer the footage, he fainted. Most of the footage was unusable, I mean people would have run out of the theatre. The stuff we used was the least offensive in that sense.' The actuality footage was then kinetically cut together by editor Anthony Buckley with action scenes filmed with the actors.

Kotcheff identified with the outback landscape, which is so beautifully and malignantly rendered by Brian West's cinematography: 'I was a bit trepidatious about making a film in a world I knew little about. However, being a Canadian, when I arrived in Australia I discovered the outback was not that dissimilar to parts of Canada. The same vast empty spaces that paradoxically are not liberating, but claustrophobic and imprisoning. And also, this hyper-masculine society.' Retrospectively, there is a post-colonial reading to be made of the film which, in addition to exploring the themes of the outsider (also prevalent in the western, of course), would take into consideration why Kotcheff, as a Canadian, was attracted to this material.

Author Peter Temple, in his foreword to recent editions of Cook's novel, comments on its post-colonial aspects, observing that John Grant's longing for the sea – or escape from the 'imprisoning centre' – is familiar in Australian storytelling. This impulse is represented in the film by a dream sequence and a photo in Grant's wallet featuring a blonde in a swimsuit: 'The coast symbolises home, women, a place where people are civilised, genteel, read books and talk

about ideas. It is not like the inland, which is alien and male and devoid of anything resembling cultural life.' The coast joins the exile (and Grant is certainly a colonial fish out of water) to the imperial centre: stray from it – the outback – and you're fucked.

Wake in Fright was nominated for the Palme d'Or in 1971 and was selected again for Cannes Classics in 2009 following its restoration. The film originally played for nine months in France off the back of its positive reception in Cannes, the only territory where it sustained good business. It was released in the UK and USA by United Artists as *Outback*. Despite critical accolades from the likes of Pauline Kael, it was not a commercial success. Kotcheff puts this down to a poor distribution strategy. He recalls protesting the change of title: '*Wake in Fright* sells. It sounds like a Hitchcock title. Why are you going to call it *Outback*?''

During its initial release, the film failed to resonate with Australian audiences. This is usually attributed to the reaction against its blistering portrayal of Aussie masculinity (Jack Thompson tells a great story of an audience member at an early screening who stood up and yelled, 'That's not us' at the screen). This explanation is limited, suggesting that Australian audiences were, like Grant, disdainful of the 'Yabba locals'. But the film was released at a very particular socio-political moment in Australian history. It was right on the cusp of the Whitlam era, which was characterised by a spirited rejection of the influence of Britain and the 'cultural cringe'. Regardless of the fact that he comes a cropper, John Grant's imperiousness and British bearing are also likely to have alienated Australian audiences, who were seeking to identify with an Australia that neither conformed to British

'When I first showed our executive producer footage of the kangaroo hunt, he fainted. Most of it was unusable. People would have run out of the theatre'

ways, nor the hick, outback stereotype.

Among *Wake in Fright*'s many champions, then and now, is Martin Scorsese, who describes it as 'a deeply – and I mean deeply – unsettling and disturbing movie. I saw it when it premiered at Cannes in 1971 and it left me speechless. Visually, dramatically, atmospherically and psychologically, it's beautifully calibrated and it gets under your skin one encounter at a time.' During our conversation, Kotcheff takes great delight in Scorsese's love of the film, remembering Scorsese (before anyone knew who he was) sitting behind him at the Cannes premiere because Scorsese was audibly exclaiming, 'Wow! Wow!' throughout the screening, and 'Wow! He's going to go all the way!' Australia's reigning prince of shadows, musician and composer Nick Cave, also upholds the film as 'the best and most terrifying film about Australia in existence'

Grant is a complex and absorbing anti-hero, but *Wake in Fright*'s rescue from oblivion has a real hero. Film editor Buckley began a seven-year search for the original negative when it became clear that the film was only kicking about in clapped-out 35mm and 16mm prints and was not available on video or DVD. 'Group W Films had financed it with an Australian company NLT and the film was swallowed up by creditors when Group W went bankrupt' explains Kotcheff. 'Tony Buckley discovered that the company that processed the film in London had shipped the negative to the creditors in New York, but no one could tell him who or where that was.' In his director's statement for the NFSA restoration notes, Kotcheff elaborates: 'The search for it was almost like a film – 'The Hunt for O-Negative' – and its final discovery, in Pittsburgh of all places, in a box marked 'for destruction' sounds like a filmmaker's fantasy. The relentless lead detective who found it [Buckley] has served me brilliantly twice now. The loss of the negative would have been a knife in my heart as *Wake in Fright* is one of my proudest achievements'.



Wake in Fright is in UK cinemas, including BFI Southbank, from 7 March and is released on Blu-ray and DVD on 31 March

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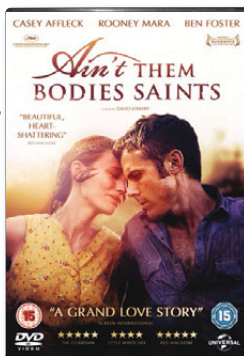
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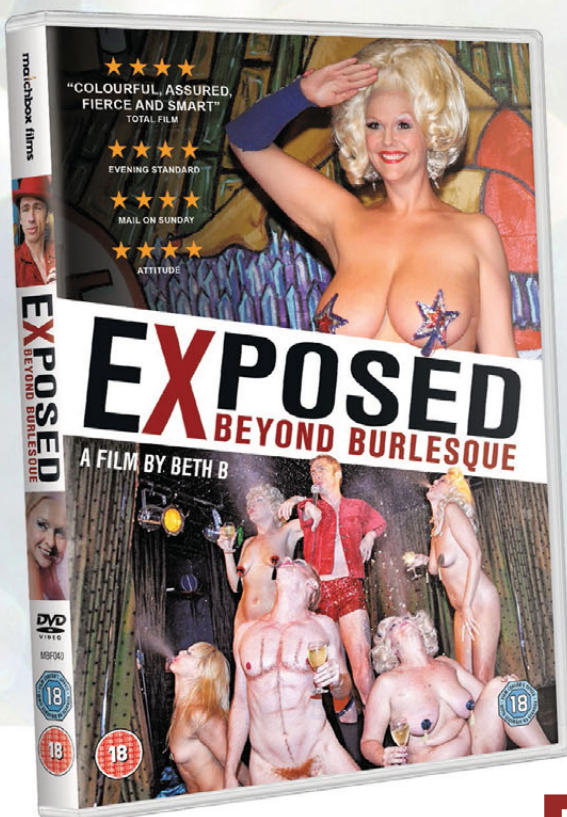
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ENGLISH MAGUS: THE MANY FACES OF DEREK JARMAN

Part punk prophet, part English traditionalist, Jarman was a man whose occult interests sat side by side with an earthy political engagement. Twenty years after his death, it's time to reappraise the legacy of an enigmatic artist, filmmaker, designer, activist and dreamer

By William Fowler

In the 20 years that have elapsed since Derek Jarman died from an Aids-related illness, the public perception of the man and his art has changed. A figure of great personal charm, he was once seen principally as a modern arthouse auteur, associated with style, poise, political meaning and sexuality; more recently he has become a celebrated name within the interdisciplinary world of the gallery. During his life, he adopted many roles and guises. His works on film and in design, as well as his collages and paintings, drew on a rich palette of images and symbols and an extraordinarily broad set of influences. His work also differed wildly according to context and opportunity and can be understood from many different viewpoints, complicating how we think about the director and his filmmaking practice. Derek Jarman is not easy to grasp.

Jarman's attention to theatricality, performance and the merging and cutting-up of past and present has greater currency now than ever. Works by Emily Wardill, Anja Kirschner & David Panos, Ben Rivers, Julian House, Ben Wheatley, Andrew Köting, Spartacus Chetwynd and Oreet Ashery all display his influence, while music videos would not be the same had he not explored his dream imagery with such intensity. The impact of this complex and fascinating director has been considerable. It's time that we looked at his films again.



'Queer Pagan Punk: Derek Jarman' runs throughout February and March at BFI Southbank, London and is part of a wider year-long celebration of Jarman's work through various events, including the exhibition 'Pandemonium' at Somerset House, London, until 9 March. See www.jarman2014.org for details

A MAN FOR ALL SEASONS
The public persona of Derek Jarman (right) has shifted over the years, from subversive outsider to arthouse auteur to celebrated figure in the interdisciplinary world of the gallery





SHOCK TACTICS

Jarman's work in the 1970s showed a subversive desire to take on the establishment. (Clockwise from below) Jarman on the set of *The Tempest*; Jordan in the director's punk fable *Jubilee*; and the proudly homoerotic drama *Sebastiane*



THE PROVOCATEUR

Derek Jarman wasn't always regarded as the consummate artist-filmmaker we remember. In the 1970s his persona was very different – at least in the eyes of the public. *Jubilee* (1977), for instance, projected a hip, fierce, cynical attitude. The punk anti-celebrity figure Jordan, framed in tight close-up on the poster for the film, positively snarls at the camera: "I hate you, come get me." The film, which features a pre-pop Adam Ant and transsexual punk performer Wayne County, is stylish and slightly schlocky, not unlike an American exploitation movie.

Jarman's 70s films are grounded in hard, concrete

reality. They're poetic, for sure – particularly the super 8 films he shot from 1972 onwards – but the action is direct. Despite its magical milieu, hard surfaces and "wild waters" are viscerally present in *The Tempest* (1979). Everything was shot and shown on film, unlike in the 80s when Jarman frequently used



Jarman's 70s films are grounded in hard, concrete reality. They're poetic, for sure, but the action is direct

video as an intermediary layer, introducing a kind of hazy gauze between the viewer and 'reality'.

Sebastiane (1976), his first feature, co-directed with Paul Humfress, is particularly tactile and sweaty. It tells the story of the third-century Christian saint, a praetorian guard who is humiliated and tortured by his fellow soldiers. Shot on 16mm in natural light, it radiates a Herzog-like intensity. Holly Johnson of the band Frankie Goes to Hollywood found it "an affirmation that homosexuality could be beautiful, shameless and out in the open". It was the first openly homoerotic film to be publicly screened in the UK and did phenomenal business when it opened at the Gate Cinema, a London venue particularly associated with marginalised fare.

In his historical films Jarman liked to use anachronistic items – for instance, an electronic personal organiser in *Caravaggio* (1986), his biopic of the baroque painter, a work that took him years to achieve. Such items penetrate the worlds created. To use objects to embody and carry potent meanings from both within and without the immediate context was an approach he learned from Robert Rauschenberg. The American artist produced collisions of print and paint with three-dimensional found objects that extended beyond the frame. His exhibition at the Whitechapel Gallery, London, in 1964 ran while Jarman was at the Slade School of Art. Acknowledging the influence, Jarman said: "Construction, collage or any form of junkyard art... has the ability to make literary ideas pictorial." The garden Jarman constructed out of driftwood and found material in the bleak wilds of Dungeness could be considered a late homage.

THE SET DESIGNER

Ken Russell was an early champion of the director. He discovered him in the late 1960s when Jarman was designing sets for Frederick Ashton's ballet *Jazz Calendar* and John Gielgud's *Don Giovanni* at the Royal Opera House.

Russell hired Jarman to create the monumental, bold and austere sets for *The Devils* (1971), his controversial movie about religious and political corruption in medieval France. Jarman's towering white brick walls and antiseptic interiors provide the perfect wipe-clean backdrop to the brutal carnage that unfolds. Russell told him that he wanted the physical examination Sister Jeanne (Vanessa Redgrave) undergoes

for proof of sexual violation to be like a rape in a public toilet. It was this powerful image that Jarman brought vividly to life for the film – claustrophobia, outbreaks of violence and plenty of fluids feature against the relentless white.

The settings Jarman uses for his films are often small, contained environments, intense other worlds that reflect the emotional landscapes of his characters. The house in which Prospero and his daughter live in *The Tempest* is dark and labyrinthine. In order to either illuminate or exit this shadowy space, they must resolve their personal difficulties. Similar confinements are evoked in *Sebastiane* and *Edward II* (1991).

Often his spaces are sparse – usually because of budget limitations – but carefully populated with specific, votive objects. The critic and film historian Steven Dillon has said that both Jarman and the Armenian director Sergei Parajanov “pose and collect”, redistributing images and iconography from their own respective cultures.

Like Parajanov, Jarman created powerful, painterly composed set pieces in which actors could play out certain tensions and relationships. Ornate objects, clothing, vessels and decorations set the mood for both filmmakers, and stills from their films can look remarkably similar.



The settings Jarman uses for his films are often intense other worlds that reflect the emotional landscapes of his characters



RELIGIOUS ORDERS
Jarman (above in the garden of his house in Dungeness) designed the sets for Ken Russell's *The Devils* and was asked by the director to make the scene showing Sister Jeanne's physical examination (right) look like a rape in a public toilet

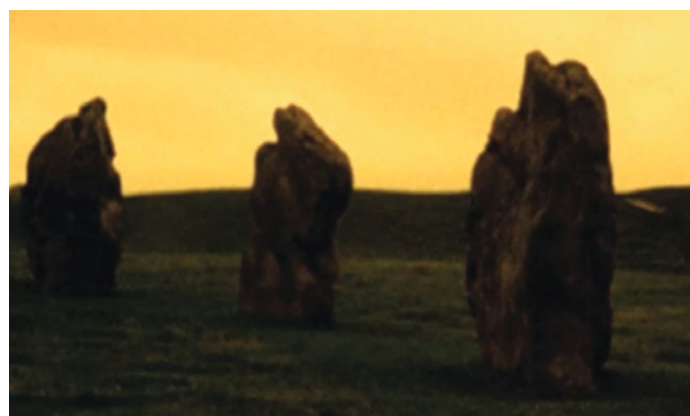


THE MAGUS



Jarman began shooting super 8 films in 1972. He later recalled: "In 1974 I bought copies of Jung's *Alchemical Studies* and *Seven Sermons to the Dead*, and these provided the key to imagery that I had created quite unconsciously in the preceding months; and also gave me the confidence to allow the dream-images to drift and collide at random."

A Journey to Avebury (1971) travels through shimmering fields to ancient stone monuments, referencing ancient paganism, while *Art of Mirrors* (1973) and *Fire Island* (1974) directly utilise the timeless imagery implied in their titles. Gold and fire flare and mirrors dazzle the camera, throwing its automatic light meter out of kilter. For Jarman, the films and their symbolism represent metaphysical transformations – journeys into the mind evoking change and rebirth like that in Jean Cocteau's *Orphée* (1950).



DREAM CATCHER
Jarman explored dreams and magic with his super 8 (bottom and bottom left) in (clockwise from top left) *Art of Mirrors*, *Fire Island* and *A Journey to Avebury*

The recurring image of people shining a light directly at the camera – and by inference at the audience – connects past and present, film time and viewing time. Jarman projected these films at very low frame rates, the slow movements and pulsing film grain intensifying the dream-like imagery. It was as though he was altering reality.

Jarman was always actively interested in the occult and, among other esoteric volumes, he acquired an original copy of Heinrich Cornelius Agrippa's 16th-century work *Three Books of Occult Philosophy*. He was also very taken with the Elizabethan occultist and alchemist Dr

John Dee, a figure evoked in Shakespeare's *The Tempest* – hence Jarman's adaptation of the play. Dee claimed to speak with angels and used a black obsidian mirror to make contact. Jarman thought of the film camera as a modern equivalent, an occult technology through which to gain insight into the less visible aspects of existence and explore ideas about magic. "Film is the wedding of light and matter – an alchemical conjunction," he wrote in *Dancing Ledge*.

Even Jarman's later feature films can be considered as either rituals or forms of sympathetic magic. He created parallel narratives to the grim politics and homophobia of the 1980s and willed for change.

David Bowie was at one point going to take the lead role in the director's unmade post-apocalyptic film *Neutron*. On meeting Jarman, he asked if he was a black magician.

Jarman saw the film camera as an occult technology through which to explore ideas about magic

THE TRADITIONALIST

Jarman was a subversive who spoke out against hypocrisy and was critical of the government. Yet he embraced Shakespeare, British history, traditional crafts and the classic role of the artist. In that sense he was a romantic who loved the English landscape – particularly the Dorset coast of his happy childhood memories. Shooting *The Angelic Conversation* (1985) was a way of revisiting that joy and gently highlighting the power of place. His was a very particular vision of England, but one that nonetheless sought to evoke the mythic, Eden-like dream of Arcadia.

In his family home movies – elements of which appear in *The Last of England* (1987) and the video for Annie Lennox's 'Ev'ry Time We Say Goodbye' – Jarman can be seen with his prim, sharply dressed mother on the lawn outside their house. Raised in an upper-middle class household by a mother he adored and an abrasive father, he was schooled in traditional ways as but lived abroad as a child due to his father's military postings.

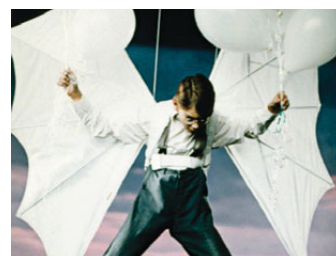
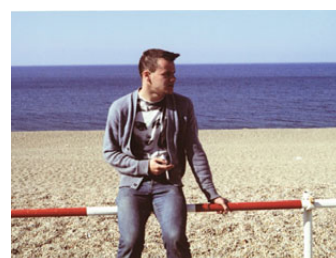
Perhaps his romanticism complicated his politics. *Edward II* critiques the state and celebrates a gay monarch who was persecuted and

killed, but at no point does the film question the role of the monarchy. For all his bite, he was no traditional left-winger.

His films are sometimes like late 20th-century equivalents of John Piper's bright, semi-hallucinatory prints and drawings of churches from many years earlier. There is a desire to find new modes of expression but the thing to be voiced – the content – is often classic and timeless.

Yet Jarman could also be irreverent in his appreciation of British culture. *Wittgenstein* (1993), his film about the philosopher, demonstrates a quirky sense of humour and is a reminder that Jarman liked *Carry On...* films. The dialogue is witty and the inclusion of a furry alien played by Nabil Shaban is delightfully bizarre.

Jarman's films are littered with figures who collectively represent a sort of British dramatic tradition: Sean Bean, Christopher Biggins, Robbie Coltrane, Judi Dench, Michael Gough and Laurence Olivier. The list is impressive but perhaps also a little bemusing when one considers he also collaborated with bands like Throbbing Gristle and Coil.

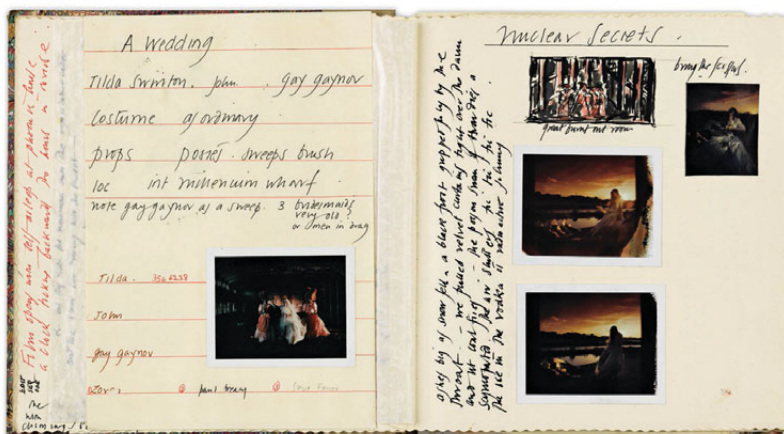


ENGLAND, MY ENGLAND
Jarman often presents a romantic view of England in his films. (Clockwise from above) The director with his mother and sister in home movie footage included in *The Last of England*; *The Angelic Conversation*; *Wittgenstein*; and *Edward II*



His was a particular vision of England, but one that still sought to evoke the mythic Eden-like dream of Arcadia

MASTER OF CEREMONIES
Jarman liked to encourage his actors to embrace the unpredictable, as in *Edward II* (below); one of his notebooks recording ideas for *The Last of England* (right)



In his book *Dancing Ledge*, Jarman speaks of a tradition of theatricality in British cinema, of an archness that goes back to Elizabethan spectacle; drama emerging from a self-conscious delight in gesture and the blurred lines between characterisation and the actor acting. Realism is not the goal, but the potential to truly connect with people in the tradition of Artaud's Theatre of Cruelty pushes itself forward nonetheless.

To that end, Jarman's films were conceived like 'happenings'. They are heavily staged events, with friends and trusted collaborators unleashed for

the delight of the camera; their props, camera work and acting coalescing according to the dynamic of the moment. With Jarman it was almost as though the casting of the spell was as important, if not more so, than the immediate magic it wrought.

The films were community events. Jarman worked regularly with filmmakers John Maybury, Richard Heslop and Cerith Wyn Evans, costume designer Sandy Powell, art director Christopher Hobbs, producer James Mackay and, of course, his muse Tilda Swinton. There were many other collaborators too, often from diverse backgrounds,

and Jarman made full use of their talents. Actor Steven Waddington said that Jarman encouraged him and his co-star to push their performances in *Edward II* and embrace the unpredictable. Hence the moments of absurd, physical humour within this bleak and angry story about homophobia.

Jarman's emphasis on staging and on creating on the spot connects his work to that of Jack Smith, the American artist behind the notorious underground film *Flaming Creatures* (1963). Like Smith, Jarman welcomed challenges, and change. If his budgets were cut, his public attitude was, "Great," as it meant another set of circumstances had to be conquered with the imagination. This often meant stripping back the set, to make the theatrical elements purer and more overt.

Jarman liked to introduce his films, and his very particular charisma is hard to resist when seeing him on old television programmes. He is attentive, personable but resolutely clear on the issues that matter to him. Seeing him speak in the cinema must have been a seductive experience. Even in that context he was casting a spell, drawing people into a collaborative realisation of his vision.



*If his budgets were cut,
his public attitude was,
'Great,' as it meant
another set of issues
had to be conquered*

THE ACTIVIST

For all his charm and honesty, Jarman became an angry man. He came of age in the 1950s and 60s, before homosexuality was legalised. By his own accounts, he internalised his desires, fearing his own sexuality. When the Conservative government prepared the Local Government Act 1988 and its notorious Section 28, which allowed for an amendment proposing that a local authority “shall not... promote the teaching in any maintained school of the acceptability of homosexuality as a pretended family relationship”, Jarman was incensed.

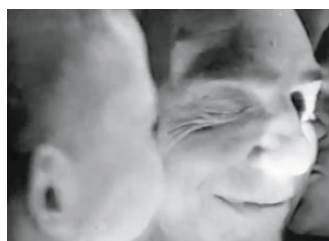
Speaking in a 1988 video *Clause and Effect*, he said: “These people [the Conservative government] are frightened of life,” adding that his films would “definitely be there to promote homosexuality from now onwards.”

When, in 1986, Jarman learned he had contracted HIV, he made the news public, wanting to dispel the fears that surrounded the virus and its consequences.

Gay characters and narratives had been a focal point for the director from *Sebastiane* onwards, but with *The Last of England* something more assertive emerged. The pressure group Outrage! was featured in *Edward II* and Jarman also took to the street with them, taking part in a gay and lesbian kiss-in outside Bow Street police station. He can be seen defiantly yet joyfully pressing lips with other male protesters in Steve Farrer’s experimental *Kiss 25 Goodbye*, shot at the time.

Jarman’s desire to confront prejudice and stand by his beliefs – in his films, in the press and on the street – is one of his most attractive and compelling qualities. Whether he was making commercial or more personal work, his sincerity has never been in doubt.

Jarman’s desire to confront prejudice and stand by his beliefs is one of his most attractive qualities



RIGHTS AND WRONGS
(Clockwise from far left)
Jarman with Jimmy Somerville at a protest;
The Last of England;
pressure group Outrage!
featuring in *Edward II*;
Sebastiane; and Jarman in
Steve Farrer’s experimental
Kiss 25 Goodbye

DARK MATTERS

At once elliptical and confrontational, Claire Denis's films have often proved challenging viewing. With her latest, 'Bastards', a harrowing drama about a man returning to comfort his sister after the suicide of her husband, she travels even deeper into the heart of darkness

By Nick Roddick

In *XX/XY*, a 2002 US indie directed by Austin Chick from the heyday of mumblecore, a character scours New York for the perfect birthday present for her thirtysomething boyfriend. What do you get for the hipster who, culturally speaking, has everything? Answer: a Claire Denis box-set.

Denis, who has by now made enough features to fill three box-sets (although one is still to be put together), has always been something of a cult figure. This is not so much because her films are stylistically outside the mainstream – though with her elliptical approach to narrative they can often seem so – but because they are usually extremely confrontational.

Like the filmmakers and novelists she loves and admires – Kurosawa and William Faulkner are well to the fore in her latest film, *Bastards* – she shows rather than explains. She points at where to look (sometimes, as in *Bastards*, by looking away) but doesn't tell us what to see. Denis's films have a professional sheen – she was an assistant to Wim Wenders and Jim Jarmusch before making her directorial debut – but what they reveal is elusive, fragmented and often dark, in both senses of the word. Perhaps for that reason, her films have occasionally had to build up a reputation abroad before gaining recognition in France. "I don't know," she says with a very Gallic shrug. "Maybe I'm not a typical French person."

Bastards is certainly not a typically French film. With Denis's bleak themes, it recalls the novels of Dennis Lehane, portraying what seems to be an everyday world, then peeling back the surface to reveal something unspeakable underneath.

Put simply, the elusive plot here concerns Marco Silvestri – played by Vincent Lindon, who starred in Denis's *Vendredi soir* (2002) – the captain of an oil tanker who returns to Paris at the request of his sister, Sandra (Julie Bataille) to help with a trio of problems: her husband has committed suicide, the family shoemaking firm is bankrupt and her daughter has been injured in mysterious circumstances. That these problems prompt him to hire an apartment above the mistress/wife of a certain rich patriarch on whom Marco may be plotting revenge is as much as I should give you.

"Really, the main theme of the film when we started," Denis said, after the film's premiere in Cannes last year, "was when the strong male character finds that this predatory world to which he has returned is liable to destroy him. This is something that really obsessed me. It's a fear for me: degradation, intrusion... Things like that are what I fear. Why? Because it's painful. I don't think anyone would like to be the victim of a predator. What do I mean by predatory? I mean violent, sexual. Something that really invades... But predatory is not only sexual and violent. It can be insidious, it can be invisible, it could also be economic."

What it can never be – and what one doubts Denis would be interested in – is peaceful. Right from its open-

ing shot of torrential rain, not so much in front of as enveloping the camera, the narrative lurches forward, jumbling chronology but moving ahead. In particular, it is propelled by the Bernard Herrmann-like score from a band as cultish in the music world as Denis is in the world of film: Tindersticks. Composer Stuart Staples sat in with Denis in the editing suite, working to the image rather than the narrative. The band has worked with her before, in various combinations, so must be used to her material, but initially found the new film's subject matter difficult to deal with. They obviously had a change of heart, however: even Denis admits *Bastards* would be hard to imagine without the Tindersticks score.

Denis insists that *Bastards* is quite a straightforward piece of storytelling, by her standards. The reason, she says, is because she was under pressure and had to work very quickly. Yes, the same was true of *35 Shots of Rum* (2008), but that was a story she had nurtured for years. This was *ex nihilo*.

"The producer [Vincent Maraval of Wild Bunch] said to me in April, 'Let's make a film this summer.' I said, 'You mean next summer?' And he said, 'No, this summer.' And then Vincent [Lindon] said, 'Yes, I want to be part of it and I'm free in August.' So there were only two solutions: either I say, 'You're crazy' or 'If it's a joke, let's try it and see.' I thought it was funny that they pushed a person like me because I'm famous for being slow. Instead of working in loops as I normally do – because being a very anxious and nervous person, the loops help – I decide to respond by saying, 'OK, let's work block by block, or brick by brick.' So we wrote the script like that, exactly like that, and we shot it like that too."

Working for the sixth time with cinematographer Agnès Godard but for the first time on digital, Denis creates a world where the sun only shines on children – literally: everyone else is in shadow. In one scene, Lindon is in the underlit background while a child sits in front of him bathed in sunlight. And, since children are the first victims, the world of *Bastards* is predominantly dark. Says Denis: "It is very hard to film in the shade digitally: the equipment always tends to add light. But I learned."

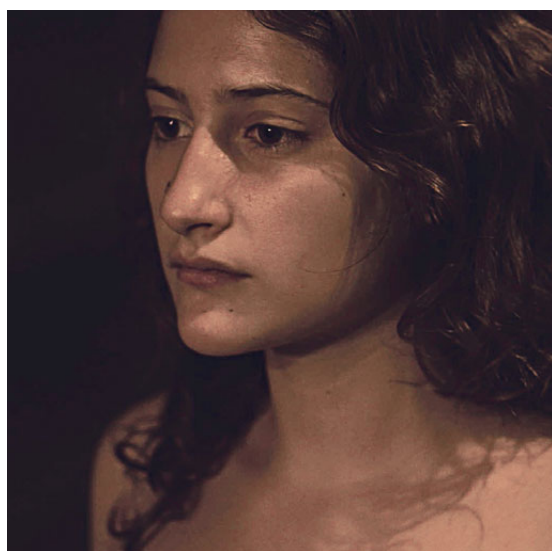
Godard's camera is mostly in close, using available light even when illumination of any kind seems to be totally unavailable. The effect is nightmarish but also contained, in the way that hiding under the bedclothes or in a cupboard is contained: shielded but not secure, always under threat from what you can't quite see.

Bastards plays out in the aforementioned blocks – discrete scenes linked by a relatively simple plot that it would be too difficult to detail further here (even if, after two viewings, I felt fully confident about doing so), mainly because building the links between the blocks is one of the chief sources of satisfaction the film yields.

Suicide, murder, car crashes, sexual abuse and incest, not to mention the very unpleasant use of a corn husk, are gradually revealed as Marco, a strong, self-reliant



'It's not perverse to decide to die... This is more like a tragedy – like Medea killing her children because she's jealous. Beside that, perverse is a pale and tiny word'



DRIVEN TO DESTRUCTION
 Vincent Lindon (above, in duck-egg blue Alfa Romeo) as the vengeful Marco and Lola Créton (left) as his traumatised niece Justine in *Bastards*, directed by Claire Denis (top right)



man, slowly but inexorably drowns in the evil he encounters.

Denis has strong views about Marco's self reliance, his essential maleness. "The whole thing started for me," she says, "with an idea from some Kurosawa movies from the 1950s and the 1960s, especially *The Bad Sleep Well* with Toshiro Mifune. Vincent has a body like Mifune: a strong body, sexy maybe, but also a body you can trust and lean on and which will help you to solve problems – a solid body. And in those films by Kurosawa, the tragedy was that this person, this strong man, was crushed by corruption and mistrust."

To call Marco a man of few words prompts a sigh from Denis. "It's always the same question I'm asked: 'Why do my male characters not speak so much?' Well, they say enough to be understood. For me it's all right. I have always worked like that. I mean, this guy is alone in his office and he tries to kill himself: it's difficult for him to have a long dialogue."

Denis also turns out to be a bit of a petrolhead. Always a director to linger on surfaces, as much at home with objects as with people – Jean-Luc Godard, for whom cinema was *la mise en scène des objets*, would have approved – Denis turns out to have quite a thing about Vincent's vintage duck-egg blue Alfa Romeo. "That Alfa is my favourite car," she says, "and I had this idea for Marco that he would drive such a car. It's the car I like best. It's like a toy – if you drive it, you feel good. It's a beautiful car. It's not a Ferrari, it's a really Italian car. For me, it's great."

And she is likewise protective of the 'block' of the film in which a car full of young people, smoking dope and groping one another, drives erratically on a dark country road before crashing – a sequence some have found perverse. It's a word that triggers a flood of clarification.

"For me when I was very young and I first drove I remember, I would not say sexual pleasure, but I did so much enjoy driving – and driving fast, especially at night... To do crazy things like smoking a joint... That to me is not something perverse: it's what you do when you're young... It's not perverse to decide to die. Sometimes it's a tragedy, but to be at a moment where you're very young and you want to end your life? For me there's no perversity there. Perverse means something that you do pretending you're doing something else. This is more like a tragedy – like Medea killing her children because she's jealous of her husband. Beside that, perverse is a pale and tiny word."

Bastards is on a different level, where tragedy lurks and dark forces prevail. Quoting Chester Himes, Denis prefaced *No Fear, No Die* (*S'en fout la mort*, 1990) with the words: "All men, whatever their race, colour or origins, are capable of anything and everything." A quarter-century later, the same remains true. Lehane would understand; Kurosawa and Faulkner too.



***Bastards* is released in the UK on**

14 February and is reviewed on page 72

JIM JARMUSCH

As a director who has often embraced elements of genre cinema, from westerns and prison-break films to samurai and hitmen, it was perhaps only a matter of time before he turned his attention to vampires. Here, he explains his unconventional take on the subject in *Only Lovers Left Alive*, a darkly comic tale of enduring love among the undead, and why he was determined to drive a stake through viewers' expectations. **Interview by Nick Pinkerton**

I met Jim Jarmusch at a bar and grill off the Bowery in New York's East Village. The space is a converted gas station, and on this particular afternoon the big picture windows were giving a view of a slow snowfall outside. The last time I'd set foot in this particular place of business, I was out to interview Sara Driver, Jarmusch's long-term partner and helpmate, as well as a distinctive filmmaker in her own right.

Jarmusch was doing the publicity rounds for his latest film, *Only Lovers Left Alive*, which concerns a very, very, very long-term relationship. The central couple are Adam and Eve, played by Tom Hiddleston and Tilda Swinton. Adam and Eve have had to learn to live with one another and to find new things to talk about over the course of hundreds and hundreds of years, because they are vampires. They have also had to adapt to the changing times – rather than draining and discarding bodies, they now buy grade A blood from crooked hospital employees. Seen in separate residences in Detroit and Tangier as the film opens, they come together to bask in one another's company, as they have been doing for centuries, and it seems that the continuing dialogue keeps them alive as much as blood.

All reliable sources say that Jarmusch is just past 60, and though he's had his distinctive white pompadour since he was a teenager, he has the smooth complexion gifted to people of middle age who've stayed out of the sun and done what they wanted with their lives. He is not a vampire, though he does share some of his protagonists' sartorial tendencies, including a fistful of warlockish rings. We find a corner booth, and I suggest that I would like to begin by talking about the new movie and then look back over his career. This turns out to be an unpopular suggestion.

Jim Jarmusch: A career overview? I'm not a big 'looking back' guy, but I'll do my best. I don't even watch my films. Once I'm done with them they're gone for me.

Nick Pinkerton: Fair enough. *Only Lovers Left Alive* seems like a movie in which the characters came first and situations were then developed out of the characters. Is that correct?

JJ: Yes. I wrote a script with similar characters about seven or eight years ago. The story was quite a bit different but not entirely. It was two lovers, vampires, the story took place in Detroit and Rome, going back and forth, but it was a bit different. I had trouble getting that financed. It had a bit more action in it, but people kept saying, "You need more action," looking for a more traditional kind of thing, and then the more they'd say that, the more I would remove the action. I thought, "No, I'm not making a vampire story, I'm making a love story and they happen to be vampires." This isn't a horror film, it's not an action film, it's not a scary movie. The characters were intact and I just rewrote the thing with these characters. My movies change as they go along quite a bit, but basically the characters were the most central thing.

ON JIM JARMUSCH

'Stranger than Paradise made me feel that films could be made in a different way in America. Jim has a way of explaining America. He says, "I'm an alien, but I'm also an American, and we'll experience this world together." That's why he's become such a force in international film – he explains America to aliens, while remaining an alien himself.'

Tilda Swinton in the New York Times

'The key to Jim is that he went grey when he was 15. As a result, he always felt like an immigrant in the teenage world. He's been an immigrant – a benign, fascinated foreigner – ever since. And all his films are about that.'

Tom Waits in the New York Times

'Jim is my man.'

Spike Lee

NP: In using horror tropes – the zombie, werewolf or in this case the vampire – filmmakers often feel the need to turn the creature in question into a metaphorical placeholder: vampirism as metaphor for addiction and so on. I didn't catch much of that in *Only Lovers...*

JJ: Well, there are elements of that. Vampires are always metaphorical at some level. Maybe in our film – and I'm not Mr Analytical about it, I just make the things – vampires are metaphors for humans, basically. They have an overview of history, they see humans are becoming more and more fragile... Maybe they're just metaphorical for the fragility of human beings, for what's happened to our world. They're more fragile than humans, they're very fragile. They could get bad blood. In the 21st century, with forensic evidence and authorities, you can't just leave around dead bodies, you have to be very careful. They're quite sophisticated about it. So maybe that's the metaphor.

NP: The actual process by which they get their hands on blood is treated in a very matter-of-fact way. It seems like what you're specifically attracted to in the vampire myth, far more than the monster movie element, is the aspect of immortality, particularly that sense of historical overview that you mention.

JJ: That was particularly interesting. But you know, if humans are going to survive, survival will be precarious and that has to be addressed, and that's what happens with these creatures every day. Having said that, vampires are not monsters, they're not zombies, they're not the undead, they're humans that have gone through a transformation, so they're still basically human. In this case they have heightened perceptions from having lived so long... And the characters are hopefully interesting characters to start with – maybe in some ways exceptional, in some ways not.

NP: The gloomy, despairing Nosferatu cursed to eternal life is a cliché, but here immortality has some element of wish-fulfilment about it. These characters get to live a fantasy that





lots of people have indulged in – there is time enough to read everything, to listen to everything – and they've taken full advantage of this. On the one hand there's the tragic plight of immortality, but on the other there's a sense of what a gas it would be to live forever.

JJ: I think the only way you could want to live forever, especially with someone else – because it's also a drag, and Adam is suffering in a way – the only way to survive immortality would be to have a sense of wonder and interest in things. If you didn't, you'd do yourself in. Who wants to live forever if you're not interested in your own consciousness? Adam and Eve are quite involved because of their timeline, and when they throw out Eve's sister, Ava, she calls them snobs. Well they are snobs in a way, but wouldn't we be if we'd been alive for a thousand years and absorbed all this? People would think, "Wow, Mr Know-it-all, I guess they know everything." Well, compared to them we would, but it's the nature of their experience, not of their personalities. They're not innately snobbish, but they seem that way to everyone else.

NP: Adam and Eve are both enormous repositories of what would fall under the rubric of trivial knowledge, and that seems to be a big part of what's enabled them to stay amused with one another through the centuries.

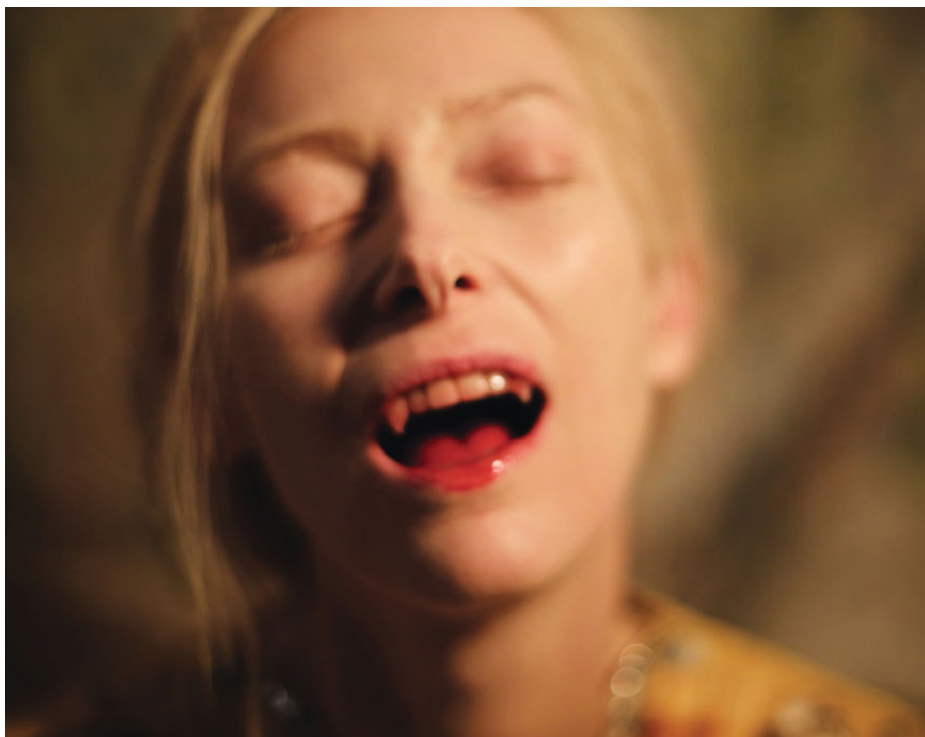
JJ: As I get older I find my friends that are my age or even older, the most engaged and alive of them are the people who still have that sense of wonder, who still want to know more or learn more. Things they don't know about excite them. The most creative people I know are certainly like that, so hopefully Adam and Eve have that as a personality trait as well.

NP: While Adam's certainly curious, he's not necessarily involved with the contemporary world. He's a vintage gearhead, he's obsessed with the mid-century American rock 'n' roll moment. Do you think that's in his nature, to always be lagging a few decades behind?

JJ: I don't know if the film gives us that information. I know that my interpretation – again, I'm not very analytical about it – but you'll remember he plays the violin briefly, some Paganini. And maybe his interest now isn't in virtuosic music. He's making drone music. We see that he's capable of being a virtuoso to some extent, or at least highly proficient technically, but that's not how he's really using the instruments he's recording with now. Maybe it's a phase, or his interest has just drawn him towards that period. Maybe he's interested in the period before him, I don't know. I find that often people become musically very obsessed at some point in their lives with the music that preceded their birth. I've noticed that with a lot of people, if they're born in the 70s they're into 60s music, or born in the 60s they're into 50s stuff.

NP: It's that sense of having missed the boat, having shown up late to the party. Could you say a few words about the dirge-like theme that runs through the movie, how it came to be composed?

JJ: The music was supposed to reflect these characters' interests in things that are both old and new without being hierarchical about it, without making divisions between



Blood simple: Tilda Swinton as Eve in *Only Lovers Left Alive*

popular culture or so-called high culture or academic culture... They obviously don't have a hierarchical approach to things.

So, years ago I met this guy on the street, Jozef van Wissem, and he gave me a CD of his lute music. We passed very briefly and I was sort of intrigued by the guy visually: very tall, long greasy hair, wearing a black suit with a pointy tie that was not in fashion at the time, and I thought he was quite striking. He was very polite, had an accent that I found out later was Dutch. He said, "I don't want to bother you, but would you mind if I gave you a CD?" He gave it to me and he left. It was an early recording of his: really beautiful music, minimalist lute music. Many of the pieces were in the palindromic form, where they go up to the centre and then they reverse – not tape reverse, but reverse chord progressions. And I thought, "Yeah, this guy's cool," and we became friends, I contacted him.

And then even when I was conceiving the early version of this film I had this idea of having him compose some minimalist lute music. But when I got the second iteration of these characters down, what became the film, and Adam became a musician, I wanted the score to have the lute music as well as something more recent – drone, rock kind of stuff. So, Jozef made the lute music for the film, and then my band, Sqürl, which is me and Shane Stoneback and Carter Logan – and now Jozef when we play live – we created the other music. So we made music, some of it with the lute, some without, some the lute without us, and that became the musical texture for the film.

And then of course there are two live performances: White Hills and Yasmine Hamdan, [to represent] Detroit and Tangier – well, White Hills are from New York, but y'know. It's a mixture of music made by vibrating strings, lute music that's old-school stuff, and then the rock 'n' roll

drone music that's psychedelically vibrational, and that became the score for the film. We have a nice soundtrack album coming out on All Tomorrow's Parties records. In fact, I just returned from Berlin, where we had two musical events in Cologne and Berlin where they showed the film to an audience and then the audience came to a show that night, which was Jozef playing lute and then Zola Jesus, who's in one of the pieces on the soundtrack, sang briefly. Then White Hills played, then Yasmine Hamdan played with two electric guitarists from France, and then Sqürl played. We're going to do that in Paris and London too, and then in New York and Detroit.

NP: Some of the film was shot in Germany, yes?

JJ: Yes, we had a very hard time financing this film, so the only way to make the film was, to a large degree, with German subsidies, which required that I use a primarily German or European crew, and to shoot some of the film in Germany, some of the interiors – though all of the Tangier stuff was in Tangier, and some of the Detroit interiors are in Detroit.

NP: How did you land on those two settings?

JJ: I don't know... I love them both so much and they're both very striking and unusual, and they're both crumbling – Detroit in a kind of depopulated way and Tangier in a very populated way. They both represent cultures in a strong way: Detroit post-industrial America; the decline of the American empire is seen very transparently in Detroit. And Tangier is a culture that has been controlled by everybody over centuries – so many other cultures have taken it over – and it still has its own intact identity, which is a very, very particular identity. I love them both visually and just as places, so I don't know, it's partly intuitive, partly visual.

NP: Tangier has such a history of expatriate culture, too. Adam has that wall in his

home – he says he has no heroes, but he has that wall of heroes – and you see William Burroughs's picture there, and then you think of Paul and Jane Bowles...

JJ: And Brian Jones and the Stones later, and Jean Genet is buried about 70 miles south of Tangier, and Matisse lived there. So yeah, a long history of expats living there, and a long history of Tangier being very open to weirdos. Burroughs's Interzone writings refer to when Tangier was full of spies and drugs and there was sexual experimentation going on. It certainly has that in its history, and you can still feel it there. Have you ever been there?

NP: No. I've been to Marrakesh and Casablanca, but never to Tangier.

JJ: They're quite different – I've been to Marrakesh, too. In Marrakesh there's a kind of gulf between the old world and the new world, and they're there looking at each other; in Tangier it's a little more all mixed up. For example, I saw an image I'll never forget. I was scouting in Tangier; it was not so far from the centre, the Grand Socco, and there was a little alleyway, and in the foreground was a cell phone store, a small store, and two girls from Tangier in their early twenties, dressed modern, kinda hip, miniskirts, talking... And then I could see down the alley and there were guys in medieval clothing slaughtering an animal with wooden clubs. And it was all in the same sightline. In Marrakesh those would be separated; in Tangier they're not, they're still more entwined.

NP: Which is very appropriate for your movie, because you're dealing with subjects for whom 1700 is practically yesterday. And there's a lot of that in Detroit too, a city that so much money has flowed through, leaving its traces behind...

JJ: Exactly. I'm from Ohio, northwestern Ohio, Akron...

NP: I'm from Cincinnati.

JJ: All right! What's round on the end, high in the middle? Ohio! But when I was very small, my parents talked about Detroit as though it was like Paris, it was something very magical, more culturally active than, certainly, Cleveland. I mean, Cleveland has its rock 'n' roll, outsider music history, but Detroit, oh, man... Starting with certain big band sounds to John Lee Hooker blues sounds to Motown to Eminem to the whole grunge/ garage thing, very important contributions to house and techno, and still, you can't kill the music in Detroit, it's very strong. And that's just music.

Of course the architecture and all that from the industrial era, it's just remarkable, though it's being abandoned, literally abandoned – there are skyscrapers in downtown Detroit that are beautiful that are abandoned, it's like Johannesburg or some shit. I ultimately confess that our depiction of Detroit is limited and somewhat unrealistic though... we're depicting a character who is hiding out there, hiding out from the world in a way. It's the best city you could imagine to do that in. However, we show Detroit through the eyes of characters who don't see other people there... In fact Detroit, like a lot of urban America, is kind of apartheid, segregated, heavily... So the black parts of Detroit, with the exception of a few middle-class and upper-middle-

class neighbourhoods, are destitute with no schools, no street lights, no roads being fixed, no policemen even going in there. If a building's on fire they let it fucking burn. And we don't show that, and that is really Detroit. I mean, they have a fire department policy that is called, officially, the 'Let it burn' policy, where if there's no verification of anyone in a burning building somewhere in Detroit, they don't send the fire department.

I left out, sorry, The Stooges and the MC5, when I was talking about music.

NP: Living in this depopulated city suits the characters living in a hermetic world for two. They are named – perhaps not by birth, but as we come to know them – Adam and Eve, which suggests they're not just the only lovers left alive, but maybe the first lovers ever to live.

JJ: I must say, first of all, the Adam and Eve thing I took from a book that's a great inspiration for this film, that I never refer to in this film, which is Mark Twain's *The Diaries of Adam and Eve*. It's one of the most beautiful and funny books ever written about the differences between male and female perceptions. It's a fantastic book, one of my favourite ever, and it's a big inspiration for the film, but I didn't want to refer to it. The names are from Twain's biblical appropriation, and from my Twain appropriation. The title of the film is poetic, and I took it from existing works. There was a poem of that title around the turn of the 20th century, and then a fantastic British book in the 60s called *Only Lovers Left Alive*, about a youth culture revolution taking over England. A great book. Now, in the late 70s, when I was at New York University, I was Nick Ray's kind of assistant, his gofer. At one point he had optioned this book. He gave me this book as a present some months before he died. He said, "Take this book, I dunno, I never got to do anything with it, maybe

'The only way to live forever would be to have a sense of wonder and interest in things. If you didn't, you'd do yourself in'

something in it will be of inspiration." I love the book actually, but I didn't want to adapt it. I think Mick Jagger owned the rights for a while. And it's a good book, but titles are titles. That book took the title from a poem, there are quite a number of songs out there that preceded our film... And I thought it was such a beautiful title and I wanted, in my imagination, Nick's blessing on the film, so I did take something from it: I took the title.

NP: Well Ray's the guy with the best, most evocative film titles of all time: *They Live by Night*, *In a Lonely Place*...

JJ: *On Dangerous Ground*...

NP: With the possible exception of *The Lusty Men*, which is a sufficiently beautiful movie to make you forget the title...

JJ: And *Johnny Guitar*'s great because it's kind of a Brechtian western, so to call it something almost silly is very appropriate. There's even dialogue – they're talking and the guys say to Sterling Hayden, "What's your name, partner?" "My name's Johnny, Johnny Guitar." And everyone laughs. And then Hayden says, "What's your name, friend?" The guy says, "The Dancing Kid." And the sets look like a ski lodge – anyway, I love that film.

NP: Not to mention the fact that 'Johnny Guitar' is, ironically, kind of a second fiddle in the movie that carries his name. Back to *Only Lovers*..., there's one point where Eve says to Adam, "You missed all the fun," which implies that he was turned into a vampire after she was, possibly by her...

JJ: I'm not sure. In earlier versions of the script we did identify their ages, and she was a 2,000-year-old druid from a matriarchal tribe, and he was only 500 or 600 years old. The reason I took it out is because, while editing the film and editing the script, I started removing anything that seemed like it was delivered for the audience. They know how old each other is, why would they talk about it? So it was false, and there were quite a few things that were false that I removed. But it's still ingrained in there, really only in that one section.

NP: I mentioned earlier Adam's pantheon of heroes, which he insists he doesn't



Immortal beloved: the yin-yang nature of Eve and Tom Hiddleston's Adam is emphasised in their styling

have, and there are a couple of names who come up there. One of them is the inventor and electrical engineer Nikola Tesla, who I know exhibits some fascination for you: he comes up in *Coffee and Cigarettes* [2003] and I've heard some scuttlebutt that you have an opera project dealing with Tesla in the works...

JJ: Yeah, opera in quotes. Yes, working with Phil Kline and possibly someone else really incredible, but I can't say yet. Yes, we're working on this as well, this kind of dreamlike musical thing about Tesla. Now, Eve's teasing Adam about the heroes thing, because he's very contradictory, he's always dissing humans as being zombies, saying they don't respect their imagination, that they're pathetic. He's definitely hurt by human behaviour, but of course he is a human who's been transformed, and he loves these human contributions so much, and there are a wide variety of people on his wall of portraits, from science and rock 'n' roll, comedians and a few film directors...

NP: Would it be safe to say that his pantheon is very similar to your own?

JJ: Yes, it's derived from my own. My only problem was I kept giving the art department more and more and more names – they had to clear these photos – and so at a certain point they said, “We’ve just got to stop here, the wall’s not even big enough.” I said “Fine.” But it could’ve gone on and on and on, I gave them hundreds of names. It doesn’t represent all of my top picks, but they’re among my 1,000 top picks. And some of them are perversely personal and not really Adam’s, possibly, but I like that it’s shown briefly enough that you’re not able to analyse it too carefully. I think of Adam as being – he talks about the Romantic poets, right? Even Schubert is mentioned at some point. He is a Romantic, obviously, and Eve is not, she’s more of a classicist or something. Adam needs for some reason to put some of his work into the world too, which is really dangerous. Why would he do this? He has a sort of ego – or maybe insecurity is what ego is in a way – about his place, whereas for her that’s of no interest at all: she wants input, she’s interested in everything in the world. I’m not judging them, not saying one is better than the other, they’re kind of yin and yang anyways, which is a visual thing in the film: male/ female, dark clothes/ light clothes, dark hair/ light hair. There’s a kind of yin-yang intention to them, because to me the most successful love stories are those where lovers accept their counterpart for who they are, and they don’t want to change them.

I had a beautiful experience last night. I was at the Apollo Theater where they had this Lou Reed memorial thing, and Laurie Anderson was there. She and Lou Reed somehow found this beautiful thing with each other, what a beautiful thing obviously they found, where they just wanted the other one to be who they were, to accept them and love them. I think that’s the key to beautiful love stories. So Eve accepts Adam and his Romantic nature, and he accepts her less emotional, more rational approach to the world.

NP: Adam’s the textbook pale poet, a capital ‘R’ Romantic, and the idea of decay is so important to the Romantic, the idea that the sands are running out of the hourglass,

whereas as a classicist, Eve believes the hourglass is always going to flip over, that there are certain recurring throughlines in history, that everything is cyclical – as she says about Detroit: “This place will rise again.”

JJ: Exactly. She’s not talking about Detroit as an industrial centre, but some post-apocalyptic future that will be beyond that where water is the most valuable thing...

NP: Which goes back to Tesla, and the idea of humans learning to exploit ambient energy, untapped potentials...

JJ: The fate of Tesla indicates a huge failure of human nature, of greed being more important than earth-shattering advances, scientifically and in terms of quality of life. The choices were made for profits, not for humans. The case of Tesla is such an amazingly sad example of that. If we had followed Tesla, we’d have free energy all over the fucking planet. We would have an exchange of food sources based on an overview of the planet, where with wireless communication, the internet, we could find out: “Uh-oh, Africa needs wheat... Surplus of wheat over here in Asia, start shipping it now...” Immediate and free energy anywhere, imagine what a different world we would live in. He envisioned cities draped with plants for oxygen, all the buildings covered in plants and ivy, birds in the air, electric vehicles, no emissions and hydrocarbons and all this shit we have. So we really missed something by not following him. And this is very frustrating to Adam, who builds his own car; his house is powered by his own Tesla-like dynamo. Adam and Eve are sort of outside-type characters, bohemian types, and they probably already were hundreds of years ago. They’re not exactly representing the square world to start with. They’re kind of eternal. I hate the word

‘Adam and Eve are sort of outside-type characters, bohemian types, and they probably already were hundreds of years ago’

‘hipsters’, but they are certainly on the outsider’s side, they believe in the imagination as the most powerful thing, in science, art, whatever.

NP: You mentioned Schubert earlier, and there’s a reference to Adam gifting a piece of his work to Schubert who takes credit for it. Then John Hurt plays a vampire Christopher Marlowe, who we learn is responsible for the works of William Shakespeare, and what comes out of this is the idea that nothing is really properly attributable...

JJ: Yeah. And it doesn’t matter. I mean, the Shakespeare thing is very fascinating to me, I’m a bit obsessed, I’m a total anti-Stratfordian. I believe the man named William Shakespeare was probably illiterate. There’s definitely a scam attributing all the work to this guy and paying him for it.

NP: Are you a fan of the theory Edward de Vere was responsible?

JJ: He very likely wrote Shakespeare’s work or part of it. The thing about Marlowe that attracts me is Marlowe’s death – it’s been a subject of interest to me for years, I’ve studied everything I can read about it. I believe it’s also a complete scam. His death was contrived, I don’t believe that he was murdered when they say he was. I don’t want to get started because I’ll go on and on and on. It really doesn’t matter. But people who don’t believe in ‘Shakespeare’ include Mark Twain, Sigmund Freud, William and Henry James, Emerson, Orson Welles – there are a lot of people who say, “Oh, come on, this guy couldn’t write any of that shit, are you kidding me?” But in the end it really doesn’t matter, because we have the stuff. It’s kind of interesting how it’s politically been used, Shakespeare, how he was heralded about 100 years after his death by Britain when they needed some cultural heroes to unify under. Everything we know about Shakespeare, every fact we know, exists on about four pages of text... There is not a single paper of text that William Shakespeare wrote with his own hand, no literary text, nothing. A pretty thorough job of erasure, you know what I mean? The guy wrote a lot of shit. We have things from other people, we have things from Marlowe, Thomas



Two's company: Swinton, with John Hurt as a vampire Christopher Marlowe in *Only Lovers Left Alive*

Kyd, things from contemporaries, many who wrote far less than Shakespeare. Where the fuck did it all go? When he died, how come he didn't have a single book or anything cultural?

NP: And illiterate daughters... To the best of my knowledge, though, this is the first time the theory has been advanced that an undead Christopher Marlowe was responsible for the First Folio.

JJ: I hope so. And obviously he became a vampire in older age, obviously he lived well beyond the age that they say he died, was turned much later. That's the implication.

NP: You said just now, "It doesn't matter because we have the work." And that touches on something that runs through your own work, a rejection of the idea of cultural appropriation, the idea that culture is the property of any one person, much less any one people.

JJ: For example, you don't have Galileo without Copernicus. These things always inform each other, that's how humans progress. In science it's fully acceptable to say, "Okay, I'm incorporating Einstein's theory so that I can arrive at Quantum theory." That's totally acceptable, but in art or expression, sometimes people have a problem, they'll call it theft or appropriation. It's just more waves of the same ocean that keep coming. It's absurd to say that something exists without inspiration or influence from its predecessors – how ridiculous. I really love this continued flow of ideas and expression, of people taking from those people who inspire them. Without that, wow, no Bob Dylan, sorry, no Jean-Luc Godard.

NP: You mentioned Nick Ray earlier – were there any other guiding lights who you were following in this film?

JJ: No, although there was a whole lineage of marginal vampire films that aren't necessarily the Nosferatu story. I love *Nosferatu*, it's the greatest vampire film, but y'know, if you see Carl Dreyer's *Vampyr*, it's not really a horror film, it's not the same thing. And you can follow this line through films like Tony Scott's *The Hunger*, Abel Ferrara's film *The Addiction*, Michael Almereyda's *Nadja*, Kathy Bigelow's *Near Dark*, Claire Denis's *Trouble Every Day*, *Let the Right One In* from a few years ago. All of these are very beautiful films that belong to a different tradition than the Nosferatu thing or the Bathory thing. There are these other films on the margins that were very inspirational in the way they sidestepped expectations and came out with some very beautiful results. The history of those films certainly inspired me.

NP: In some respects you've pursued a career path that's inverse to the norm. Very often filmmakers start their career working within genre constraints with an idea that this will allow them to make personal films later – not to say that there's any diametric opposition between the two. But you started out making highly idiosyncratic films without genre elements, then around the time of *Dead Man* [1995] and *Ghost Dog: The Way of the Samurai* [1999] you started to engage with genre, though of course very much on your own terms.

JJ: Again, I'm not very analytical, but I tried in the early films to find subjects that weren't quite assignable to a genre – although there were, starting with *Down by Law* [1986], there



Hiddleston as Adam in *Only Lovers Left Alive*

were certainly references, to prison-break movies or I don't know what. But I was trying to stay out of the way of expectations.

And then, I'm kind of a film nerd. I love film history, I've absorbed a lot of different types of cinema in my life, and genre is very prominent in the history of filmmaking, and this does attract me. Now again, I've tried to walk around expectation, but I certainly love crime films, assassin films, samurai films, martial arts films, many, many westerns. My inspirations in westerns are a bit like what I just described of the marginal, alternative approach to the vampire films, there are many precedents of this kind in westerns – like we were talking about *Johnny Guitar*. I like genres, though I try not to particularly fulfil the expectations of them and to follow my own inclinations, but I'm not shy at all about embracing them. Is it something that changed at some point in me? I don't know. I made a film called *Mystery Train* [1989] that belonged to a literary genre, starting with Chaucer and Boccaccio, of small stories that linked together and that were about a journey, a quest to something, and in *Mystery Train* the Mecca was Memphis. I don't know, I follow things that I find of interest to myself.

NP: Having done a western, a samurai movie, a hitman movie and a vampire movie, is there any genre you have a yen to take a crack at?

JJ: I'm not going to realise this particular thing, but years and years ago I wrote a crazy

sci-fi film that took place in Tokyo, but that was in the 80s. I do have an idea for a zombie film – again, I've had it for years, nothing to do with the current zombie thing. But I have a very funny take on the zombie film that maybe I would make, a low-budget thing in black and white. I do have those, but that's about it.

NP: How aware of the current vampire cycle have you been? Have you watched the *Twilight* films?

JJ: No, you know, I haven't seen any of the mainstream things. The most recent thing I saw was the original *Let the Right One In*, not the remake, so I haven't seen any of these vampire movies or the TV shows or anything. I just don't... My time is precious. I read, I make music, I listen to music and I absorb a lot of films. For example, I avoid all these TV shows like *Breaking Bad* et cetera because I'm afraid I will get addicted, and I don't have time for it. I'd rather be watching Ernst Lubitsch than the *Twilight* films. I've still got to keep my flow coming, my input of things I love, and my time is limited, it seems to be getting shorter, time seems to go faster and faster.

I kept a journal this year, 2013, of all the films I saw – saw in full, I had to see every frame – and I'm only up to around 130. It seems like I should have one a day, man, I should be up to at least 300, but I'm not. In my younger days there were years where I watched 600 films.

NP: 130 is healthy! While watching *Only Lovers...* I was really struck by the omnivorous curiosity of the central characters, a perspective that you couldn't arrive at as a writer if you spent all your time cooped up in cinephilia.

JJ: Y'know, I don't read good reviews of my films, I love the negative ones. Maybe it's a little masochism, but more it's a matter of, "What do they think? They must be very different from me..." I love the bad ones. And on this movie I read a few that said something like, "He's just showing off his arcane knowledge." Wow. I thought I was just celebrating the wealth of things you might be interested in in the world, I didn't think it was me showing off! But I can sort of see how that could be interpreted as pretentious for some people. It doesn't concern me,



The monster club: Mia Wasikowska as Ava and Anton Yelchin as Ian in *Only Lovers Left Alive*

**The Limits of Control**

really, because I'm proud of our film and what it says, but I like to always put myself in the other person's place, if I can, in any situation. So I can understand, maybe...

It's all about expectations: if you're expecting something and you don't get it then you have a negative reaction. We made a film before this, *The Limits of Control* [2008], where those of us making the film intentionally wanted to remove all the things we could that would be expected. So we're making a film that's about an assassin, but we're gonna take out action, we're gonna take out violence, we're gonna take out sex, we're gonna take out a lot of dialogue, we're gonna take out a lot of plot. Well, what the hell is left? Can you make a beautiful film without those things, which is what we attempted to do? Whether we succeeded or not isn't for us to say, but for a lot of people we failed so much because we did exactly what they didn't want. They wanted their expectations fulfilled. And that's hard. But I think in life too, and in love, if you have expectations, you will get let down. Because you wanted something – not just in love, but in your life in general – the more you expect, the more you're opening yourself up for disappointment.

NP: Or rather closing yourself to the possibilities of something else.

JJ: Exactly.

NP: Similarly, *Only Lovers...* is a vampire film, but only in the absolute last shot do you get the classic Max Schreck bared fangs moment.

JJ: Yeah. But here's an interesting thing. I found that the first depiction of fangs in cinematic vampires, doesn't come until the 1950s in a Mexican vampire film. Schreck's Nosferatu doesn't have fangs...

NP: He has that rabbit overbite...

JJ: He's got some funny teeth, but he doesn't have the classic fangs. That surprised me. I thought, "C'mon." I tried to find earlier depictions. I couldn't find anything. Anyway, every movie adds its own myth to the vampire – the holy water, the cross, the garlic – so our addition was the gloves they wear. We thought, "We gotta add one thing of our own." When Adam and Eve aren't in their own habitat, their hands are covered. Why? I don't know. Do they not want to leave prints? Do they have hypersensitivity? We don't explain. But we know there's some reason they wear the gloves. One of our reasons, besides that, was that we thought it looked cool. It kind of makes sense, given the advanced state of technology and forensics, if you're trying to keep your identity a secret. And these people do not try to disguise themselves by blending into the background. If

**Mystery Train**

I saw them walking down the street – it's like... Iggy Pop told me when he was recording the first Stooges album, which John Cale produced, he said the first time that Cale came into the studio with Nico, they came in the studio, and John Cale was wearing a cape, and Nico was Nico. And he said, "Wow, man, they looked like vampires, they looked like the fuckin' Addams family, man!" I wanted our characters to be striking.

NP: It's very funny when they're posted up by the doorman at that dive rock club in Detroit, and every head turns to look at them.

JJ: I love the fact that throughout history musicians can look outlandish, it's almost part of their job, that they can look gender-bending or whatever. I love that freedom that musicians have been given. For their gift to us they get to be wild and flamboyant if they choose. Even in classical music in the old days it was called longhair music, Franz Liszt with the long hair – the straight people weren't really wearing that kind of style then, but the musicians could get away with it, they were almost encouraged.

We tried to pattern Adam and Eve a bit after a mid-60s London kind of thing. Their hair is

'Every movie adds its own myth to the vampire – holy water, the cross, the garlic. We thought, "We gotta add one thing of our own"'

**Permanent Vacation**

very important because we tried to get those wigs... we were using human hair and it just wasn't happening, until we started looking online at different hair textures, and Tilda said, "Well, why are we only looking at humans, why aren't we looking at animal fur as well?" So we started looking at animal furs, and Gerd [Zeiss], our German makeup designer and wig guy said, "Oh, ja, often in the past I have mixed some animal hairs with human for thickness." We said, "Like what?" He said, "Oh, the best is goat and yak fur." And so in the end our wigs were made of human hair, goat hair and yak hair.

And another secret thing which I can reveal, because no one will ever notice it unless they're some kind of biologist, is that when you hear a heartbeat – when they're briefly naked sleeping in bed, or when he's listening with a stethoscope – we used a wolf's heart, but slowed it to a human speed. They've got little animalistic things in them genetically, it happened in the crossover.

[At this point another crossover begins – the next interviewer is about to arrive.]

"We didn't get to look back much," Jarmusch says by way of apology, though with evident relief, before he decides to toss me a bone. "My first film, *Permanent Vacation* [1980], is a road movie, but travelling by foot. A pedestrian road movie. I guess most of my films are road movies. I hope that helps." ☺

i Only Lovers Left Alive is released on 21 February and is reviewed on page 88

**Dead Man**

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PETER O'TOOLE



Peter O'Toole: 'I can't stand light. I hate weather. My idea of heaven is moving from one smoke-filled room to another'

Despite his eight Best Actor Oscar nominations, he never bettered his turn in *Lawrence of Arabia*

2/8/1932 – 14/12/2013

As he'd already made his mark in the theatre, Peter O'Toole's second screen appearance – and first encounter with a major director – could easily have put him off film acting for life. Cast in Nicholas Ray's *The Savage Innocents* (1959) as one of the two mounties who arrest Anthony Quinn's Zorba the Eskimo, O'Toole was clumsily dubbed into what one reviewer described as "spaghetti western American" – and, adding insult to injury, was also denied billing. Luckily, two years later he achieved instant stardom as David Lean's *Lawrence of Arabia* – though only after Marlon Brando and Albert Finney had nixed the role.

David Thomson noted "a desperate intensity" in O'Toole's playing of Lawrence, and a critic at the time wrote of the "messianic fury in his eyes" as he charged the Turks at Aqaba. O'Toole's account differed somewhat: "I was pissed as a fart, trying to stay on the bloody camel." Two decades later, after playing a megalomaniac film director in Richard Rush's ramshackle cult movie *The Stunt Man* (1980), he confessed to having based his performance on memories of Lean.

Part of what made O'Toole so intriguing as

an actor, and perhaps also explains why he never quite sustained himself at the stellar heights that *Lawrence* seemed to foreshadow, was the tension between the urgency of his on-screen persona – the gaunt face and staring ice-blue eyes that seemed to hint at madness – and the throwaway insouciance with which he regarded, or affected to regard, his career and the films he appeared in. "I take whatever good part comes along," he explained. "And if there isn't a good part, then I do anything, just to pay the rent. Money is always a pressure. And waiting for the right part – you could wait forever. So I turn up and do the best I can."

Whether he always did the best he could might be questioned; at times he could ham it up appallingly. But roles that invited, or even demanded, a touch of overplaying suited him well: Henry II in *The Lion in Winter* (1968) – his second shot at the role (after 1964's *Becket*) and rousinglly matched with Katharine Hepburn – or the aristocrat who thinks he's Christ in *The Ruling Class* (1972). *My Favorite Year* (1982) allowed him to send up his own image as a permanently sozzled hell-raiser who

'I take whatever part comes along. And if there isn't a good part, I do anything, just to pay the rent. Money is always a pressure'

showed up on set drunk or tempestuously hungover. "I can't stand light," he once remarked, honing his decadent reputation. "I hate weather. My idea of heaven is moving from one smoke-filled room to another."

Subtlety was within his range, though – his Scots tutor in *The Last Emperor* (1987) was delicately underplayed, and he was touching in Roger Michell's *Venus* (2006) as an ageing bit-part actor who befriends a much younger woman. On TV, as the elderly *Casanova* (2005), he gave David Tennant as his younger self a challenge to live up to, and there was a poised elegance to his voiceover as restaurant critic Anton Ego in *Ratatouille* (2007). On occasion he could be better than the films he appeared in: from the painfully trendy comedy of *What's New Pussycat* (1965) to the lumbering would-be epic *Troy* (2004), he often transcended his scripts.

Famously, O'Toole was eight times nominated for a Best Actor Oscar but never won it – a record, if an unenviable one. Finally, and with some reluctance, he accepted an Honorary Award from the Academy. And in 2012, at the age of 80, he announced his retirement from acting: "It's my belief that one should decide for oneself when it is time to end one's stay. So I bid the profession a dry-eyed and profoundly grateful farewell." It was a characteristically stylish signing-off. **Philip Kemp**

January to December 2013

Compiled by Bob Mastrangelo



Denotes an extended obituary
at bfi.org.uk/sightandsound

LATE 2012

Jon Finch, 70: actor who had his moment of stardom in the early 1970s with Polanski's *Macbeth* and Hitchcock's *Frenzy*.

Yang Teng-Kuei, 74: Taiwanese entertainment mogul who backed films by Hou Hsiao-Hsien (*A City of Sadness*) and Jet Li (*Fong Sai-yuk*).

ACTORS

Amidou, 78: Moroccan actor who frequently featured in Lelouch's films (*Life Love Death*) and co-starred in Friedkin's *Sorcerer*.

Daphne Anderson, 90: actress who was most active in film in the 1950s (*The Beggar's Opera*; *Hobson's Choice*).

Rona Anderson, 86: Scottish actress and the wife of Gordon Jackson (*Sleeping Car to Trieste*; *The Prime of Miss Jean Brodie*).

Patty Andrews, 94: singer with the Andrews Sisters, who were a fixture of wartime musicals (*Buck Privates*; *Private Buckaroo*).

Michael Ansara, 91: ubiquitous supporting player in roles of various ethnicities (*Voyage to the Bottom of the Sea*; *Texas Across the River*).

Shamshad Begum, 94: one of Bollywood's earliest and most popular playback singers (*Taqdeer*; *C.I.D.*).

Norma Bengell, 78: leading actress of Brazil's *Cinema Novo* (*Os Cafajestes*) who also acted in Italy (*Mafioso*; *Planet of the Vampires*).



Karen Black, 74: actress whose offbeat presence helped define American cinema in the 1970s (*Five Easy Pieces*; *Nashville*; *Family Plot*).

Eileen Brennan, 80: character actress who excelled at playing world-weary, brassy dames (*The Last Picture Show*; *The Sting*; *Private Benjamin*).

Richard Briers, 79: actor known for his comic roles (TV's *The Good Life*) and association with Kenneth Branagh (*In the Bleak Midwinter*; *Hamlet*).

Diane Clare, 74: leading lady featured in *Ice Cold in Alex*, *The Reluctant Debutante* and *The Plague of the Zombies*.

Louise Currie, 100: played the heroine in Republic serials (*Adventures of Captain Marvel*) and twice supported Bela Lugosi (*The Ape Man*; *Voodoo Man*).

Nigel Davenport, 85: supporting actor with a powerful presence (*A Man for All Seasons*; *Chariots of Fire*).

Valentin de Vargas, 78: terrorised Janet Leigh as Pancho the gang leader in *Touch of Evil* and was a member of John Wayne's team in *Hatari!*.

Manna Dey, 94: Bollywood playback singer, often in duets with Lata Mangeshkar (*Shree 420*; *Anand*).

Deanna Durbin, 91: teen actress-singer who was one of the biggest Depression-era movie stars (*One Hundred Men and a Girl*; *First Love*).

Daniel Duval, 68: French actor (*Will It Snow for Christmas?*; *Hidden*) and director (*Shadow of the Castles*).

Marta Eggerth, 101: Hungarian star of

operettas, popular on screen in the 1930s (*Das Blaue vom Himmel*; *Das Hofkonzert*).

Rossella Falk, 86: Italian stage actress with some notable screen roles (8 ½; *Modesty Blaise*).

Dennis Farina, 69: former Chicago cop who brought authenticity to a series of tough lawmen and gangsters (*Manhunter*; *Midnight Run*; *Get Shorty*).

Joan Fontaine, 96: see box page 60.

Steve Forrest, 87: leading man (Wise's *So Big*; *Flaming Star*) who was busier on TV.

Annette Funicello, 70: Disney Mouseketeer and wholesome leading lady (*The Shaggy Dog*; the *Beach Party* movies).

James Gandolfini, 51: actor who was beginning to emerge from the shadow of his most famous role, Tony Soprano (*In the Loop*; *Not Fade Away*; *Enough Said*).

Giuliano Gemma, 75: Italian actor of spaghetti westerns (*A Pistol for Ringo*; *Day of Anger*) who also co-starred in *The Desert of the Tartars*.

Virginia Gibson, 88: singer-dancer-actress, supporting Doris Day in *Tea for Two* and playing one of the kidnapped brides in *Seven Brides for Seven Brothers*.

Richard Griffiths, 65: played very different uncles in *Withnail & I* and the *Harry Potter* films, and triumphed with *The History Boys* on stage and screen.

Fernando Guillén, 80: Spanish actor known abroad for his credits with Almodóvar (*Law of Desire*) and Saura (*La noche oscura*).

Haji, 67: exotic dancer-turned-actress and a regular in Russ Meyer's films, notably *Faster*; *Pussycat! Kill! Kill!*.

Julie Harris, 87: stage star who delivered some indelible screen performances (*The Member of the Wedding*; *East of Eden*; *The Haunting*).

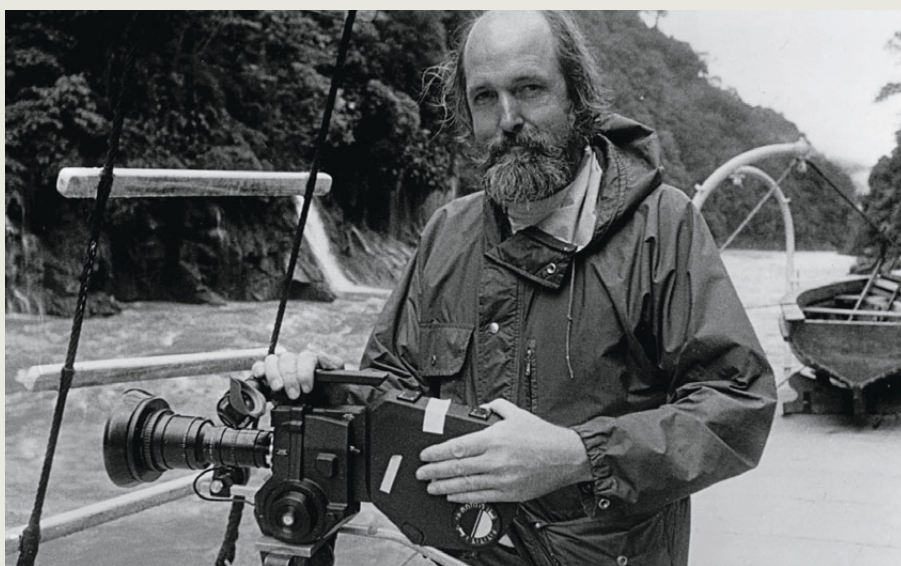
Marta Heflin, 68: actress who had her best film roles for Altman (*A Perfect Couple*; *Come Back to the 5 & Dime*; *Jimmy Dean*; *Jimmy Dean*).

Jim Kelly, 67: co-starred in *Enter the Dragon*



DIRECTOR

LES BLANK



27/11/1935 – 7/4/2013

Until his death last year, Les Blank was best known to me as the director of *Burden of Dreams* (1982), his riveting documentary about the making of Werner Herzog's *Fitzcarraldo*, and of the famous bet-payoff onstage event *Werner Herzog Eats His Shoe* (1980). In November, I was lucky enough to see some of his compelling, spirited American music films on the big screen (at the In-Edit music documentary festival in Barcelona). Performances by geniuses of the blues and zydeco are used in these to explore and capture, in sensory terms, the communities from which the music emerged. They evoke a powerfully moving blend of yearning visual lyricism and relish of simple celebratory pleasures, not least delicious food.

The Blues Accordin' to Lightnin' Hopkins (1968), for instance, shows the veteran performer

as a canny businessman and brilliant wind-up artist as well as a searing musician. *Hot Pepper* (1972) watches Clifton Chenier lose himself on stage in an accordion reverie as the camera then drifts through the audience and outside along the Louisiana railway tracks, catching young lovers shooting the breeze.

A Creole woman in *Dry Wood* (1972) extols the virtues of the old days while making sausages and cooking a huge pot of gumbo. Just watching Mance Lipscomb play a slide blues using his pocket knife in *A Well Spent Life* (1971) would be enough for me, but the film also touches deftly on racism and religion among the Texan rural poor.

These are just a few of the 40-odd films this icon of DIY indie cinema made in his lifetime. All are texturally rich and brimful of warmth, with a preference for earth tones. **Nick James**

and brought a martial arts twist to the blaxploitation era (*Black Belt Jones*).

Jean Kent, 92: sultry British actress of the postwar period (*Trottie True*, *The Woman in Question*; *The Browning Version*).

John Kerr, 81: briefly captured major film roles (*Tea and Sympathy*; *South Pacific*; Corman's *Pit and the Pendulum*), then largely abandoned acting for a law career.

Mickey Knox, 92: blacklisted actor (*Western Pacific Agent*) who was also a dialogue director and wrote the English dialogue for two Leone westerns.

Tuncel Kurtiz, 77: Turkish actor whose career stretched from Güney (*Hope*; *The Wall*) to Akin (*The Edge of Heaven*).

Bernadette Lafont, 74: was most closely associated with the *nouvelle vague* during a long, diverse career (*Les Bonnes Femmes*; *Such a Gorgeous Kid Like Me*; *La Maman et la Putain*).

Alfredo Landa, 80: star of popular Spanish comedies who then also established himself as a dramatic actor (*Vente a Alemania*, *Pepe*; *The Holy Innocents*).

Tom Laughlin, 82: director, writer and star of the *Billy Jack* movies, which broke ground for independent filmmaking.

Ed Lauter, 74: tough-guy character actor, busy in films for more than 40 years (Aldrich's *The Longest Yard*; *Family Plot*).

Barbara Lawrence, 83: leading lady of the late 1940s and 50s (*Thieves' Highway*; *Oklahoma!*; *Kronos*).

Paul Mantee, 82: played the lead in the sci-fi classic *Robinson Crusoe on Mars*.

Matt Mattox, 91: danced his way through more than a dozen film musicals, making a lasting impression as one of the frontier Pontipees in *Seven Brides for Seven Brothers*.

Taylor Mead, 88: poet and taboo-busting star of underground cinema, including numerous Warhol films (*The Flower Thief*; *Taylor Mead's Ass*; *Babo 73*).

Mariangela Melato, 71: Italian actress best known for her films with Lina Wertmüller (*The Seduction of Mimi*; *Love and Anarchy*; *Swept Away*).

Mikuni Rentarô, 90: versatile Japanese actor (*A Fugitive of the Past*; *Vengeance Is Mine*) and one-off director (*Shinran: Path to Purity*).

Mario Montez, 78: drag performer, cult figure and star for Jack Smith and Warhol (*Flaming Creatures*; *Harlot*).

Sara 'Sarita' Montiel, 85: major Spanish actress of the Franco era (*El último cuplé*), briefly in Hollywood (*Run of the Arrow*).

Tony Musante, 77: American actor who also frequently worked in Italy (*The Bird with the Crystal Plumage*; *The Last Run*).

Milo O'Shea, 86: bushy-browed, occasionally eccentric Irish character actor (Strick's *Ulysses*; *Barbarella*; *The Verdict*).

Peter O'Toole, 81: see box page 58.

Kumar Pallana, 94: late-blooming character actor, frequently in Wes Anderson's films (*The Royal Tenenbaums*; *The Terminal*).

Eleanor Parker, 91: had her best roles in the 1950s (*Caged*; *Interrupted Melody*) and later played the baroness in *The Sound of Music*.

Irina Petrescu, 71: leading Romanian actress (*The Waves of the Danube*; *A Woman for a Season*).

ACTOR

JOAN FONTAINE



22/10/1917 – 15/12/2013

Joan Fontaine, the only actor to turn the doubtful pleasure of starring in a Hitchcock film into an Academy Award win, excelled at playing disappointed women. Whether in a leading role or taking a smaller part, Fontaine was often the still, quiet centre of a great film, from an early appearance as shy Peggy in George Cukor's charisma-laden *The Women* (1939) to the tragic heroine of Max Ophüls's dreamlike *Letter from an Unknown Woman* (1948).

The latter film was her finest role and a perfect match for the delicate tension she brought to her best performances. Her Lisa, a woman destroyed by her longstanding, unrequited passion for an unworthy concert pianist, is as melodramatic as she is self-denying and humble, dangerously vulnerable to the musician's charms but resilient in her fantasy of reunion.

Fontaine had long mastered the weepie, having memorably played a schoolgirl besotted with a musician in 1943's *The Constant Nymph*, which would remain one of her favourite roles. In the same year she gave a whispery Jane Eyre opposite Orson Welles's booming Rochester. But in a *film noir* her calm, dignified beauty could imply calculation rather than heartbreak. She was brittle and manipulative in *Ivy*

(1947), stern and suspicious in Fritz Lang's *Beyond a Reasonable Doubt* (1956).

Fontaine will be best remembered as the sibilant voice confiding, "Last night I dreamt I went to Manderley again" at the opening of Hitchcock's *Rebecca* (1940). Her muted nerviness was sublimely suited to Daphne du Maurier's heroine: stuttering diffidently over her scrambled eggs with Maxim (Laurence Olivier); stiff-shouldered and silent when Mrs Danvers eulogises her predecessor; a crescent eyebrow raised in horror as Manderley burns.

Though Fontaine was Oscar-nominated for *Rebecca*, she won for her second collaboration with Hitchcock and David O. Selznick, as Cary Grant's petrified wife in *Suspicion* (1941). In that contest she was shortlisted against her older sister, Olivia De Havilland. Fontaine, who so well incarnated the second Mrs De Winter, felt herself rightly or wrongly to be the second Miss De Havilland, overshadowed by her sister, whom she believed her mother preferred. The sibling rivalry escalated in their later years, leading to a complete breach. De Havilland survives her, and many press reports of Fontaine's death dwelt grimly on the feud, swooping on a quip of hers from 1978 that is witty, acerbic and surely mistaken: "I married first, won the Oscar before Olivia did, and if I die first, she'll undoubtedly be livid because I beat her to it!" **Pamela Hutchinson**

Rossana Podestà, 79: played the title role in Wise's *Helen of Troy* and later starred in sword-and-sandal pictures (*Sodom and Gomorrah*).

Pran, 93: one of Bollywood's great villains who occasionally played more sympathetic roles (*Azaad*; *Zanjeer*).

Harry Reems, 65: star of the notorious *Deep Throat* whose subsequent arrest put him at the centre of a civil liberties debate.

Elliott Reid, 93: character actor who was the private eye in *Gentlemen Prefer Blondes* and the prosecutor in *Inherit the Wind*.

Amparo Rivelles, 88: prominent Spanish actress (*La calle sin sol*) who co-starred in the Spanish-language version of Welles's *Mr. Arkadin*, AKA *Confidential Report*.

Dale Robertson, 89: rugged star of westerns for film (*The Silver Whip*; *The Gambler from*

Natchez) and TV (*Tales of Wells Fargo*).
Paul Rogers, 96: prominent stage actor seen in support in films (*Billy Budd*; *The Homecoming*).
Otto Sander, 72: played Cassiel the angel in *Wings of Desire* and *Faraway, So Close!* and the drunken submarine commander in *Das Boot*.
August Schellenberg, 77: Canadian Mohawk character actor (*Black Robe*; *The New World*).
Mel Smith, 60: comedian whose film work included acting (*The Princess Bride*) and directing (*Bean*).
Graham Stark, 91: comic supporting actor and a gifted scene-stealer (*A Shot in the Dark*; *Alfie*; *Victor Victoria*).
Audrey Totter, 95: seductive, hard-boiled *femme fatale* of post-war noir (*Lady in the Lake*; *The Set-Up*; *Tension*).
Louis Waldon, 78: actor who featured in Warhol's films (*Lonesome Cowboys*; *Blue Movie*; *Flesh*).
Paul Walker, 40: best known for his role in *The Fast and Furious* franchise but also starred in *Eight Below* and *Flags of Our Fathers*.
Christopher Evan Welch, 48: promising character actor who recently made an impression with his performances in *The Master* and *Lincoln*.
Esther Williams, 91: swimming champion who was among Hollywood's most distinctive stars through a decade of aquatic MGM musicals (*Neptune's Daughter*; *Dangerous When Wet*).
Lucyna Winnicka, 84: Polish actress who starred in the films of her husband Jerzy Kawalerowicz (*Night Train*; *Mother Joan of the Angels*).
Jonathan Winters, 87: inspired comic with a manic, improvisational style (*It's a Mad Mad Mad Mad World*; *The Loved One*).
Aubrey Woods, 85: supporting actor who played Smike in Cavalcanti's *Nicholas Nickleby* and sang 'The Candy Man' in *Willy Wonka & the Chocolate Factory*.

ANIMATION

Frédéric Back, 89: Canadian animator, often focused on environmental themes (*Crac*; *The Man Who Planted Trees*).
Bob Godfrey, 91: independent animator with an absurdist bent (*Kama Sutra Rides Again*; *Great*) who also made popular children's TV programmes.
Jack Stokes, 92: served as an animation director on *Yellow Submarine* and *The Water Babies* and also worked on *Heavy Metal*.
John David Wilson, 93: animator who created the trailer for *Irma la Douce* and the opening credits for *Grease*, and directed *Petroushka*.

CINEMATOGRAPHERS

Michel Brault, 85: French-Canadian cinematographer (*Chronicle of a Summer*; *Mon oncle Antoine*) and director (*Les Ordres*).
Rafael Corkidi, 83: Mexican filmmaker (*Pafnucio Santo*) more widely known as a DP, especially for Jodorowsky (*El topo*; *The Holy Mountain*).
Marcello Gatti, 89: cinematographer who brought a startling documentary realism to *The Four Days of Naples* and *The Battle of Algiers*.
David Harcourt, 97: camera operator who worked with some of England's leading cinematographers (*A Night to Remember*; *Women in Love*).
Luigi Kuveiller, 85: shot several films for Elio

Petri (*Investigation of a Citizen Above Suspicion*) as well as Wilder's *Avanti!* and Argento's *Deep Red*.
Gilbert Taylor, 99: cinematographer whose wide-ranging career encompassed films with Kubrick, Lester, Polanski, Hitchcock and Lucas.
Vadim Yusov, 84: cinematographer revered for his work with Tarkovsky (*Ivan's Childhood*; *Andrei Rublev*; *Solaris*).

COMPOSERS & MUSICIANS

Franco De Gemini, 84: harmonica player noted for his work on spaghetti westerns, notably dubbing for Charles Bronson on *Once upon a Time in the West*.
Wojciech Kilar, 81: Polish composer who also worked abroad (Wajda's *The Promised Land*; *Bram Stoker's Dracula*; Polanski's *The Pianist*).
Armando Trovajoli, 95: prolific Italian composer and songwriter (*Two Women*; *We All Loved Each Other So Much*).
Derek Watkins, 68: trumpeter heard on film soundtracks, most famously on every official Bond film from *Dr. No* to *Skyfall*.

DIRECTORS

Aleksei Balabanov, 54: director whose films created a dark, violent portrait of post-Soviet Russia (*Brother*; *Cargo 200*).

DIRECTOR

KAY MANDER

28/9/1915 – 29/12/2013

From continuity girl to director and back to continuity girl, Kay Mander's career in the film industry took some unconventional turns. She spent her teenage years in Berlin in the 1930s, after her father was sent to work there, and her first job was as a receptionist for the International Film Congress organised by Joseph Goebbels in 1935. She used this opportunity to make contacts in the British film industry and this resulted in a job at Alexander Korda's London Films in the publicity department.

From the outset Mander was intrigued by the practical side of making films and she graduated to a continuity role following a spell in the accounts department at Denham Studios. She also freelanced for MGM, assessing novels for their feature film potential.

Her filmmaking and political education was furthered at the Highlander pub in Soho, a favourite haunt of documentary makers, whose influence clearly rubbed off on her. Those Friday nights at the pub indirectly led to a job in documentary at the highly regarded Shell Film Unit, where Mander was soon asked if she, in her own words, "would like to make a little training film, for myself – me directing". The result was the technically innovative *How to Film* (1941), a film for apprentice metalworkers, complete with tracking shots – then unknown in training films.

She went on to direct up to 50 instructional and promotional films, in the UK and

Bigas Luna, 67: Spanish director noted for his Iberian trilogy (*Jamón, jamón*; *Golden Balls*; *The Tit and the Moon*).

Antonia Bird, 62: distinguished director of TV (*Safe*) and film (*Priest*; *Ravenous*).

Les Blank, 77: see box page 59.

Chen Liting, 102: Chinese director prominent in the mid-to-late 1940s (*Far Away Love*; *Women Side by Side*).

Patrice Chéreau, 68: director who balanced work for the theatre, opera and cinema (*La Reine Margot*; *Intimacy*), and occasionally acted (*Danton*).

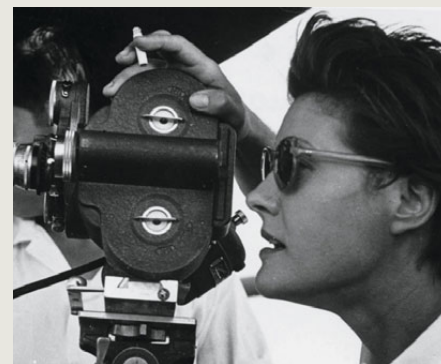
Damiano Damiani, 90: Italian filmmaker whose international reputation largely rests on the spaghetti western *A Bullet for the General*.

Denys de La Patellière, 92: director of French commercial films (*Taxi for Tobruk*; *Rififi in Paris*).

David R. Ellis, 60: veteran of Hollywood action films as a director (*Snakes on a Plane*), second unit director (*Waterworld*), stuntman and stunt coordinator.

Bryan Forbes, 86: actor who became a leading writer-director-producer of British cinema (*The L-Shaped Room*) and also worked in the US (*The Stepford Wives*).


Jesús 'Jess' Franco, 82: highly prolific Spanish cult filmmaker,



overseas. One of her most powerful and radical films is *Homes for the People* (1945), which used the bold yet simple technique of allowing working-class women to describe their living conditions, one of them memorably slating the design of her suburban house and summing up: "I call it a muck-up."

In the 1950s Mander and her husband, fellow filmmaker Rod Neilson Baxter, returned from Indonesia where they had helped set up a film unit. After directing a feature film for the Children's Film Foundation, *The Kid from Canada* (1957), Mander returned to continuity work, later saying that "I palpably had the skills" but couldn't face "battling" to continue directing.

She spent most of the rest of her career working in continuity on feature films, including *From Russia with Love*, *The Heroes of Telemark* and *Fahrenheit 451*. **Ros Cranston**

 primarily of exploitation and horror (*The Awful Dr. Orlof*, *Eugenie de Sade*, *Female Vampire*).

Herz Frank, 87: Latvian documentary filmmaker (*Ten Minutes Older*, *Flashback*).

Aleksei German, 74: see box, right.

Rituparno Ghosh, 49: Bengali filmmaker unafraid to tackle sensitive subjects (*Unishe April*, *Chokher Bali*).

Michael Grigsby, 76: widely admired documentarian (*Deckie Learner*; *I Was a Soldier*; *Living on the Edge*).

Hans Hass, 94: Austrian marine biologist, author and explorer who made numerous undersea documentaries with his wife Lotte.

Jiří Krejčík, 95: Czech director who emerged in the postwar period (*Higher Principle*; *The Divine Emma*).

Saul Landau, 77: director of politically themed documentaries (*Fidel*; *Paul Jacobs and the Nuclear Gang*).

José Ramón Larraz, 84: Spanish director, often of erotic horror (*Symptoms*, *Vampyres*).

Lau Kar-leung (AKA Liu Chia-liang), 76: leading director and fight choreographer of Hong Kong action cinema (*The 36th Chamber of Shaolin*; *Drunken Master II*).

Georges Lautner, 87: French director of more than 40 films, popular with domestic audiences (*Les Tontons Flingueurs*; *Le Professionnel*).

Carlo Lizzani, 91: Italian writer (*Bitter Rice*) and director (*Achtung! Banditi!*; *Chronicle of Poor Lovers*) and a significant figure in the neorealist period.

Kay Mander, 98: see box page 61.

William Miles, 82: documentary filmmaker who chronicled the black American experience (*Men of Bronze*; *I Remember Harlem*).

Edouard Molinaro, 85: scored a huge international hit with *La Cage aux folles* and also directed *L'Emmerdeur*.


Michael D. 'Micky' Moore, 98: silent-era child actor who became one of Hollywood's premier second unit (*Patton*; *Raiders of the Lost Ark*) and assistant directors (1956's *The Ten Commandments*).

Hal Needham, 82: innovative stuntman and stunt coordinator (*Little Big Man*; *White Lightning*) who moved into the director's chair (*Smokey and the Bandit*).

Sergiu Nicolaescu, 82: popular Romanian director and actor, especially of historical dramas (*Dacia*; *Michael the Brave*).



Oshima Nagisa

 **Oshima Nagisa**, 80: fiercely independent and provocative filmmaker and a force behind the Japanese New Wave (*Night and Fog in Japan*; *Boy*; *In the Realm of the Senses*).

Krsto Papić, 79: Croatian director who was part of the Yugoslavian Black Wave (*Handcuffs*; *My Uncle's Legacy*).

Park Chul-soo, 64: Korean director who gained international recognition beginning in the 1990s (*301/302*; *Farewell My Darling*).

Ed Pincus, 75: helped create a more personal approach to documentary filmmaking through his groundbreaking feature *Diaries*.

Ted Post, 95: directed Eastwood in *Hang 'em High* and *Magnum Force*, and made the Vietnam War drama *Go Tell the Spartans*.

Eddie Romero, 88: Filipino director of both exploitation and prestigious dramas (*Black Mama White Mama*; *Ganito Kami Noon... Paano Kayo Ngayon?*).

Richard C. Sarafian, 83: directed the cult road movie *Vanishing Point* and later turned to acting (*Bugsy*).


Peter Sehr, 61: German director, often in collaboration with his wife Marie Noëlle (*Kaspar Hauser*; *The Anarchist's Wife*).

Bert Stern, 83: fashion photographer known for his portraits of Marilyn Monroe and for directing the influential concert film *Jazz on a Summer's Day*.

Pyotr Todorovsky, 87: late-blooming Russian filmmaker of popular dramas (*Wartime Romance*; *Intergirl*).

Rangel Vulchanov, 84: director who brought international attention to Bulgarian cinema (*On a Small Island*; *The Unknown Soldier's Patent Leather Shoes*).

Michael Winner, 77: had significant commercial success as a director, notably with *Death Wish*.

 **Peter Wintonick**, 60: one of Canada's premiere documentarians (*Manufacturing Consent*; *Noam Chomsky and the Media*; *Cinéma Vérité: Defining the Moment*).

Ray Harryhausen

EDITORS

Nino Baragli, 87: Italian film editor with more than 200 credits (*The Good, the Bad and the Ugly*; Pasolini's *The Decameron*, *The Canterbury Tales* and *Arabian Nights*; *Once upon a Time in America*).

Gerry Hambling, 86: film editor noted for his 14 features with Alan Parker (*Midnight Express*) and his work on *In the Name of the Father*.

Frank Morriss, 85: edited Spielberg's *Duel*, *Charley Varrick* and several films for John Badham (*Blue Thunder*).

PRODUCERS & STUDIO EXECUTIVES

Leslie Gilliat, 96: brother of Sidney, he graduated from production manager to producer (*The Great St. Trinian's Train Robbery*; *Endless Night*).

Tim Hampton, 65: producer (*Frantic*; *A Dry White Season*) and an executive with Twentieth Century Fox for many years.


Anthony Hinds (AKA John Elder), 91: key member of Hammer as both producer (*The Quatermass Xperiment*) and writer (*The Reptile*).

Patricia Lovell, 83: former children's television performer who became a leading producer of Australian films (*Picnic at Hanging Rock*; *Gallipoli*).

A.C. Lyles, 95: producer, mostly of westerns, who was affiliated with Paramount in various capacities for more than 80 years (*Law of the Lawless*; *Waco*).

Luciano Martino, 79: producer of Italian B movies, particularly *gialli* (*Blade of the Ripper*; *The Case of the Scorpion's Tail*).

Lloyd Phillips, 63: New Zealand producer who worked in Hollywood (*Inglourious Basterds*; *Man of Steel*).

 **Elías Querejeta**, 78: producer and a towering figure of Spanish cinema, especially known for *The Spirit of the Beehive* and his long collaboration with Carlos Saura.

Robert E. Relyea, 82: rose from assistant director (*The Magnificent Seven*) to become a producer (*Bullitt*) and executive at MGM/United Artists.

Camilo Vives, 71: leading Cuban producer (*Lucía*; *Strawberry and Chocolate*).

WRITERS

Aída Bortnik, 75: Argentine screenwriter (Sergio Renán's *The Truce*; *The Official Story*).



Vincenzo Cerami, 72: writer noted for his partnership with Roberto Benigni (*Johnny Stecchino*; *Life Is Beautiful*).
Richard Collins, 98: screenwriter (Siegel's *Riot in Cell Block 11* and *Invasion of the Body Snatchers*) who played a controversial role in the Hollywood blacklist.
Brian Compport, 75: screenwriter of horror films (*Mumsy*, *Nanny*, *Sonny & Girly*; *The Fiend*; *The Asphyx*).
Ruth Prawer Jhabvala, 85: novelist and screenwriter whose collaboration with Merchant-Ivory spanned five decades (*Heat and Dust*; *A Room with a View*; *Howards End*).
Fay Kanin, 95: screenwriter (*Rhapsody*; *Teacher's Pet*) who was also a voice for film preservation.
Elmore Leonard, 87: much-filmed novelist and short-story writer (*3:10 to Yuma*; *Get Shorty*) who also wrote some screenplays (*Joe Kidd*).
Richard Matheson, 87: pioneered sci-fi and horror as a novelist (*I Am Legend*), TV writer (*The Twilight Zone*) and screenwriter (*The Incredible*

Shrinking Man; Corman's *House of Usher*).
Mickey Rose, 77: comedy writer and an important early collaborator of Woody Allen (*What's Up, Tiger Lily?*; *Take the Money and Run*; *Bananas*).
Alan Sharp, 79: Scottish novelist turned Hollywood screenwriter (*Ulzana's Raid*; *Night Moves*; *Rob Roy*).
Luciano Vincenzoni, 87: had a stormy collaboration with Leone (*For a Few Dollars More*; *The Good, the Bad and the Ugly*) and also co-wrote Germi's *Seduced and Abandoned*.

SET AND COSTUME DESIGNERS

Brian Ackland-Snow, 72: Oscar-winning production designer of *A Room with a View* who also worked on *Cross of Iron* and *Maurice*.
Rosine Delamare, 101: distinguished French costume designer (*Madame de...*; *French Cancan*; *Rififi*).
Garrett Lewis, 77: veteran set decorator (*Glory*; *Hook*; *Bram Stoker's Dracula*).

DIRECTOR

ALEXEI GERMAN

20/7/1938 – 21/2/2013

One of cinema's most heroic outsiders, Russian director Alexei German – sometimes spelled Gherman or Guerman – was the creator of a series of ambitious, increasingly visionary films. His two final features are the very opposite of what is normally considered commercial, even releasable, and it remains to be seen what exposure awaits his swansong *Hard to Be a God*. German died before he could finish it, and the film was completed by his wife Svetlana Karmalita and son Alexei German Jr, in time to be premiered (to less than enthusiastic reviews) at the 2013 Rome Film Festival.

Born in Leningrad in 1938, German was the son of writer Yuri German, two of whose stories he adapted in his films. After his first feature, *The Seventh Companion* (1968), which he co-directed with Grigori Aronov, his work became more distinctive, and less congenial to the Soviet regime. His war story *Trial on the Road* (1971) was considered 'anti-heroic' and banned until the Gorbachev years; *Twenty Days Without War* (1976) was about a war correspondent on leave after the Battle of Stalingrad.

My Friend Ivan Lapshin (1984) painted a vivid portrait of life in 1930s provincial Russia, in a story about a journalist visiting his friend, a small-town chief of police. The film gave full rein to German's tendency to privilege atmosphere over plot, but implied throughout is the approach of the Stalinist purges.

German's cinema became more wilfully challenging with *Khrustaliov, My Car!*, which was largely met with incomprehension when it premiered in Cannes in 1998, but soon acquired a reputation as radically innovative. It revolves round the so-called 'Doctors' plot', a notorious anti-Jewish



campaign of the Stalin era, and narrates the downfall of a general banished to the gulags. German's complex long takes, his technique of cramming teeming crowds of extras into small spaces and his intractable refusal to signpost either narrative or character make for an authentically nightmarish experience.

In production for some six years, *Hard to Be a God* (originally titled *History of the Arkanar Massacre*) is based on a story by the Strugatsky brothers. Ostensibly set on a distant planet where life resembles medieval Europe, the film is a Brueghel-like phantasmagoria of mud, grotesquerie and chaotic violence.

German's later films could be regarded, by industry norms, as outright failures. But conventional criteria don't come into it. His work represents some of cinema's most audacious adventures in addressing political and historical realities in lawlessly imaginary form. **Jonathan Romney**

Stephenie McMillan, 71: set decorator on *The English Patient* and all of the Harry Potter films.

SOUND & SPECIAL EFFECTS

Charles L. Campbell, 82: three-time Oscar-winning sound editor (*E.T. The Extra-terrestrial*; *Back to the Future*; *Who Framed Roger Rabbit*).
Ray Dolby, 80: engineer whose eponymous noise-reduction sound system transformed the film industry in the 1970s.
Stuart Freeborn, 98: make-up maestro who turned Alec Guinness into Fagin for *Oliver Twist*, gave Peter Sellers his multiple faces for *Dr. Strangelove*, and created the apes for 2001: *A Space Odyssey* and the various aliens for the original *Star Wars* trilogy.
Ray Harryhausen, 92: legendary special-effects creator and Dynamation innovator, who gave the cinema some of its greatest creatures (*The 7th Voyage of Sinbad*; *Jason and the Argonauts*; *Clash of the Titans*).
Stefan Kudelski, 83: audio engineer who revolutionised filmmaking through his invention of Nagra portable tape recorders in the 1950s.
Marcel Vercoutere, 87: created special effects for *McCabe & Mrs. Miller*, *Deliverance* and most famously *The Exorcist*, including Linda Blair's head-spinning robot double.
Petro Vlahos, 96: special-effects pioneer whose innovations in composite photography, beginning with 1959's *Ben-Hur*, greatly improved on the bluescreen process.

MISCELLANEOUS

Marc Breau, 89: choreographed *Mary Poppins*, *The Sound of Music* and *Chitty Chitty Bang Bang* with Dee Dee Wood.
Roger Ebert, 70: writer whose accessible style and long-running television programmes made him the most widely known American film critic of his time.
Syd Field, 77: author and teacher whose manuals on screenwriting were both highly influential and hotly debated.
Denis Forman, 95: revived the BFI as its director (1949-1955), including establishing the National Film Theatre, and went on to become an influential TV executive.
Alfredo Guevara, 87: oversaw Cuba's film industry as the founder and long-time chief of ICAIC, Cuba's state-run film agency, and the annual Havana film festival.
Stanley Kauffmann, 97: influential film critic with the *New Republic* for more than 50 years.
Donald Richie, 88: prolific writer and scholar who enthusiastically explored Japanese culture and played a critical role in introducing Japanese cinema to the West.
James L. Tolbert, 86: one of Hollywood's first black lawyers and an important voice for better opportunities for black performers and technicians in the entertainment industry.
Sheila Whitaker, 77: film programmer, scholar and director of the London Film Festival.
Peter Worden, 75: English optician and local historian known for his role in rescuing the Mitchell & Kenyon films and donating them to the BFI.

REDISCOVERY

ANDALUSIAN GAMBLES

Still undervalued even at home, the films of Gonzalo García Pelayo offer a suitably complex portrait of Spain under and after Franco

By Olaf Möller

Back home in Spain, film director-music producer-bullfight entrepreneur Gonzalo García Pelayo is best known for the way he got filthy rich, which was by developing a truly brilliant system for winning at roulette. The core of said system is a very simple notion: as human beings are flawed, they cannot produce something perfect. Take a roulette table: its legs may not be identical in length (we're talking fractions of millimetres here, but still); or the wheel's calibration ever-so-slightly off; or the pockets not absolutely equally spaced. If you observe a table long enough, keep a detailed record and know how to use the data that piles up over a seriously extended period of time, you'll find a way to turn the odds against the house. Which is exactly what Pelayo and his family did. Once they'd found the weak spot(s), they'd start to bet. And win. And win. And win. They made millions. When the story of their adventures in gambling

broke, the Pelayos turned into instant folk heroes.

Quite fittingly, most information about Gonzalo García Pelayo can be obtained from media devoted to gambling; also quite helpful are those on Andalusian music. It fits that Eduard Cortés's raucously rustic and mighty myth-happy biopic about the clan's exploits, *The Pelayos* (2011), focuses on the family business, digressing here and there into the paterfamilias's history in music and bullfighting, yet barely ever mentions his contributions to cinema. Then again, it's difficult to find any information on Pelayo's filmmaking even in specialised works – there's little in Spanish and close to nothing in English or other European languages. Pelayo is one of Spanish cinema's best-kept secrets.

One reason for this might be his brief period of activity. Pelayo shot the first of his six features to date, *Manuela*, in 1975; his second-to-last, *Rocío y José*, opened in 1983; except for '20,000 semanales' (1989), his contribution to an off-beat auteur-based TV series, *Delirios de amor*, Pelayo stayed away from cinema until 2013, when he finished *Alegría de Cádiz*, which looks as if three days rather than 30 years had passed since *Rocío y José*.

The years 1975 and 1983 might raise a few eyebrows, for this means that the main bulk of Pelayo's oeuvre was made during a period

known in Spain as the *Transición*, which began with the death of Franco in November 1975 and ended with the victory of the Social Democrats in October 1982. The *Transición* might still be the least appreciated era of Spanish cinema. True, many of today's greatest either started during these years or had a peak period therein. But that's only the icing on the cake. Just as interesting are the works of all those minor masters who made popular, often genre-based cinema their artistic home. Pelayo certainly belongs to the latter and decidedly bigger group of auteurs and craftsmen extraordinaires who used the suddenly relaxed laws on sex and violence to their own ends, and played their little games with an audience keen on anything different, from narratives apart to styles *outrés*.

In that regard, *Manuela* is very much a production of its time. Shot while Franco was dying and released after his death, it's a work that dares – if only so far. The T&A glories of

After Franco's death, Pelayo used relaxed laws on sex and violence to play genre-based games with narrative and style



All change: Pelayo's 1975 debut feature, *Manuela*, was shot while Franco was dying and is full of abrupt turns and impulsive choices

Pelayo's exercise in discourse-driven softcore erotica, *Frente al mar*, as well as the cinephile head games of *Vivir en Sevilla* (both 1978), are a way off. Based on a classic of Andalusian literature, *Manuela* follows the plight and passions of a young woman whose father, a poacher, was shot by a wealthy landowner. The story proper is developed in a rather conventional fashion but told in a cinematic manner that's idiosyncratic and primitive in the noblest – that is, Fullerian – sense. Just mark, early on, a funeral that goes off in unexpected directions when a gorgeous girl in red starts to dance frenetically on a tomb. The film, previously somewhat staid and dignified, suddenly explodes in a fury of colour and movement. Pelayo is all about interruptions, abrupt aesthetic turns, impulsive choices. It's difficult to imagine that a director whose cinema seems to run on inspiration and spur-of-the-moment decisions alone, who takes every opportunity to mess around with the rules of the fiction-feature game, would have the patience to study and analyse roulette tables for months on end. But Pelayo would probably point out that cinema lives on premeditated messiness, gambling on meticulousness.

Fuller is but one of many names worth mentioning with regard to Pelayo. As a child of mainstream 60s cinephilia, he loves Eisenstein and Rossellini and Ray and Godard and dozens more; if possible, he'll let his movie-lust run wild and pay homage to all of them at once. Pluralism is the name of the game. No wonder the only film of his that has latterly developed something like a cult following is his seemingly most intuitive, genre-resistant work, *Vivir en Sevilla* – an essay in total cinema.

Let the title lead the way through the labyrinth of *Vivir en Sevilla*! Which is to say the film is, first of all, an attempt to create a record of a time and place; its story of uncertain love is mainly an excuse to have people walk through the Andalusian capital's neighbourhoods, sit in cafés everybody knew back then, meet the occasional local hero and listen to the sounds wafting through the streets and alleys. In other words, *Vivir en Sevilla* is an expression of local pride. Now, it's important to remember when the film was made. Early on a date is given: 03.24.1978. Read: the film was made during the time when the Spanish constitution was being worked on, and thus the status of Andalusia within the federation decided. Looked at from that perspective, the story of two people unsure of how they should relate to one another can easily be read as an allegory for the tense and complex relationships that defined – and still define – post-fascist Spain.

Yet, if that were all, *Vivir en Sevilla* would by now be little more than a curiosity, something for historians to pore over. In reality, the re-evaluation (to not use that most abused of cine-cultural expressions: re-discovery) of this film by a younger generation of Spanish critics, historians and directors suggests that it might matter now more than ever, as a work of art. The free-spirited, sensual, playful way that *Vivir en Sevilla* moves, Pelayo's obvious love for his native region, its sights and sounds, make it an antidote to so many things deemed de rigueur these days in cinema arthouse as well as multiplex. Here is



Corridas de alegría mixes a range of genres

a sensibility that refuses to fit in, a genuine piece of movie anarchy – an example to adhere to.

Frente al mar is a pendant to *Vivir en Sevilla*, its aesthetic antithesis, austere and *Kammerspiel*-like. Again, amorous relationships have to be discussed and redefined, only this time it's done as a mix of significant-other-swapping and group therapy. More important than the commendably long stretches of pleasantly basic banging are the even longer stretches of pillow talk. Essentially, *Frente al mar* consists only of sex and talk and sex and talk. And, in the spirit of the times, everything gets discussed, from philosophy to politics to former lovers. There's still something deeply moving about the film's weird mix of commercial cunning and libertine airs, easy titillation and serious reflection about changing mores.

It took Pelayo several years to mount his next productions: *Corridas de alegría* (1982) and *Rocío y José*. The former's title promises another excursion into softcore erotica yet turns out to be an off-kilter mix of buddy and road movie, with some crime fiction, tame nudity and occasional gambling thrown into this intriguingly unpredictable concoction of genres and styles – Pelayo at both his folksiest and most nerdish. While *Corridas de alegría* feels like little more than an exercise, *Rocío y José* turned into his second masterpiece. Just like *Vivir en Sevilla*, *Rocío y José* is a paean to Andalusian culture; and just like in the earlier work, a love story is used to give the film some narrative thrust. Not that *Rocío y José* needed



Vivir en Sevilla, Pelayo's essay in total cinema

that, for the film rolls along splendidly with the sounds and movement of the pilgrimage towards the Blanca Paloma in El Rocío, at the region's outer reaches. What a sight to behold: a trail made of covered wagons, oxen and horses, people in colourful costumes, flags in the wind. The air is constantly filled with songs; a lot of screen time is devoted to musical and dance performances.

If Pelayo is to be believed, the first thing he always does is construct a soundtrack for his films – a playlist, so to speak. Only when he knows what music will be heard in any given moment does he start seeking images that will work with them. Being such a master of overstatement, this is probably not true for most of his works. The music tends to feel more like a second reality that exists close by but not necessarily in complete accord with the image(s) – it tells its own version of the story. *Rocío y José* is probably the one exception, the film where the images really 'follow' the songs. Then again, considering that a pilgrimage already has a built-in dramatic arc, and that Pelayo already knew it by heart, it was doubtless fairly easy to create a music-scape for the vistas ahead. All of which makes for Pelayo's formally most classical, compact work.

Pelayo's own journey, it seems, had come full circle – what needed to be said got said. Five very different if intricately interconnected works that as a whole perfectly encapsulate an era and its spirit(s). The rest is sweet sounds and making merry. ☺



Gonzalo García Pelayo, child of 60s mainstream cinephilia

MAKING A NICE PARTY

Derek Jarman's early shorts set the template for a filmmaker who collated great music without seeming to care too much about it

By Daniel Barrow

Derek Jarman's first super 8 films, made as he worked designing sets for Ken Russell's *The Devils* (1971) and *Savage Messiah* (1972), were shown to friends who would "come down to laugh at themselves and put on records behind them". There is already here an intimation of Jarman's short career as a maker of pop videos, directing promos for The Smiths and Pet Shop Boys: music as mere accompaniment, a separate but parallel atmosphere gliding alongside that of the image. His training as a painter, as he emphasised in interviews, combined with a lack of interest in narrative to make him an almost myopically visual filmmaker; sound in his films, it often seems, is something to be outsourced to the proper technicians and assembled like a mix tape at the dubbing stage: put a record on. (In the recently published selection of his sketchbooks, there is no mention of music.) The appearance today of a filmmaker whose work had music credits like Jarman's would smack of hip 'curation' – exactly such a charge was levelled at Lynne Ramsay's 2001 *Morvern Callar*, with its sequence of Pitchfork favourites – but few such films would treat their own soundtracks with Jarman's apparently erratic casualness.

The paradox here is that one of the factors in Jarman's ongoing acclaim is precisely his ability to put music from the margins of culture in the foreground of a potentially public cinema. The aspect of 'making a nice party', of making films partly to enjoy collaborative situations, spilled over into the soundtracks. Brian Eno, Simon Fisher Turner, Andy Gill (former guitarist with Marxist punk-funk group Gang of Four), Throbbing Gristle (who provided the soundtrack for 1980's *In The Shadow of the Sun*, and for whom Jarman directed the promo-cum-artist's film *T.G.: Psychic Rally in Heaven*), their successor band Psychic TV, Coil – even Annie Lennox miming to her own version of 'Ev'ry Time We Say Goodbye' in *Edward II* (1991): the list of glittering names, at least for fans of experimental music, is at once mouth-watering and oddly numbing. In spite of the brilliance poured into his films, one would struggle to name great 'music moments' – aside from the sunshower of Elisabeth Welch's 'Stormy Weather' at the end of *The Tempest* (1979). Just as individual shots, characters and narrative fragments in Jarman's films ping, semi-maddeningly, out of their provisional contexts, forcing the viewer to reconceive the film's shape at every step, so the music often seems to disappear into its own game of reverie and seduction before momentarily touching the carnal vicissitudes of the image.

But one can't watch *Jubilee* (1977) with the soundtrack off. Critics generally hive this one off from the rest of Jarman's work, partly because it's his most narrative film, partly because it keeps the visual effects to a minimum and partly, one suspects, out of a gut distaste for pop music.



Royal party: *Jubilee* (1977), featuring Adam and an early incarnation of the Ants



Royal pain: Jarman's 1986 video for The Smiths' song 'The Queen Is Dead'

Jarman himself recognised the bitter overtones of 'Jubilee': 'Had I betrayed Punk... Derek the Dull Little Middle-Class Wanker? Or had punk betrayed itself?'



T.G.: *Psychic Rally in Heaven*

(Conversely, it produces the amusing spectacle of pop historians trying to sift out its merely documentary content.) The film's funhouse-mirror portrait of punk, with an abrasive young star (Adam Ant) ending up in the dissolute clutches of tycoon Borgia Ginz (Jack Birkett), gives them plenty of ammunition. Jarman himself, in his diary, recognised the bitter overtones: "Had I betrayed Punk... Derek the Dull Little Middle-Class Wanker? Or had punk betrayed itself?" The note of defensiveness here, in which he imagines himself "[s]ome aristo on a fallen estate", suggests a recognition of the way the film slipped out of his control, propelled by the contradictory cultural energies it tried to absorb, by the charge and flash of pop. Giving the music more serious attention – including a lovely moment when, during Adam Ant's performance of 'Plastic Surgery', the camera's 360-degree pan reveals Jarman and crew watching next to Ginz – meant no longer being able to frame it as a semi-autonomous private joke or temporary delirium. The repeated emphasis in Jarman's films on recording and mediation

PRIMAL SCREEN THE WORLD OF SILENT CINEMA



Paris's Toute la mémoire du monde festival offered an eye-opening survey of early experiments in colour

By Bryony Dixon

The second edition of the romantically named *Toute la mémoire du monde* festival of archival film took place in Paris in December. As they had for its glamorous inauguration, the festival programmers put together an exciting and well-balanced selection of treats for a broad audience, from the general movie enthusiast to the serious cinephile, as well as attracting international film specialists from all over the world. Top of the bill was the affable William Friedkin's selection of his favourite films as well as the restoration of his own film *Sorcerer*, an adaptation of the novel *Le Salaire de la peur*, source for the French classic *The Wages of Fear* (1950). Friedkin's 1977 film has rarely been seen since it was utterly overshadowed by the release of *Star Wars*.

Another homage programme celebrated the Cineteca di Bologna's 50 years of energetic work in promoting all aspects of the cinematic art, from their prolific restoration output to their world-class festival of restorations and rediscoveries, *Il Cinema Ritrovato*. The Bolognese were inspired back in the 1960s by the work of the Cinémathèque Française and the cinephile ambience of Paris, so it is fitting that the Paris festival has in turn adopted the Italian's model. I was particularly impressed with Bologna's restoration of *Manila in the Claws of Light* (1975), achieved with funding from the World Cinema Foundation. The materials were donated to the BFI National Archive by Pierre Rissient some years ago when the political situation in the Philippines deteriorated to the point that the survival of Lino Brocka's film was considered at risk.

Also in the festival line-up were a strand of pre-Bollywood Raj Kapoor films and a full range of restorations that included titles that would be difficult to programme outside an event such as this: the nine-hour Holocaust documentary *Shoah* (1985), successfully restored at 4K resolution from Super 16mm, and the ground-breaking five-hour serial *Fantômas* (1913), screened for hardy viewers as an all-nighter. But the part of the festival I was there for was the programme of silent colour film – effectively a three-day course in every early colour system essayed by the pioneer filmmakers, consisting of screenings of sumptuous work from practitioners like Méliès and Segundo de Chomón, and examples from many British filmmakers (Lee & Turner, William Norman Lascelles Davidson, William and Claude Friese Greene, Charles Urban). The vibrancy of some of



Deauville seen in striking early colour footage

the natural colour systems developed in the 1910s was staggering; the super-saturated Gaumont Chronochrome in particular delivered some stunning images of bathers at Deauville (as above) and films about objets d'art.

The workshops that accompanied the screenings demonstrated a striking accumulation of expertise about colour film in the archive world. The barriers that have held back the restoration of films in their original colours for so long are breaking, revealing how many early films were in colour (up to 80 per cent in the 1900s) and the variety of approaches filmmakers took to the use of colour, from the jewel-like range of a Méliès fantasy or a Pathé fairy film to the much subtler palette of the 'film d'art' (adaptations of classic literary works) and the true-to-life colour schemes of wildlife films.

There was a good range of presentations, including a useful chronology of all the early colour systems by Céline Ruivo and a survey by Laurent Mannoni of colouring technique from pre-cinema days, including fascinating insights into the economics of Pathé's colour factory at Vincennes, which created such global demand in the 1900s that a good number of their films survive in most of the world's film archives. The BFI's Conservation Technology manager, Ulrich Ruedel, gave a paper on the importance of getting the science right in bringing colour back to archival film of this era. "Film is rooted in science," he noted. "Its restoration is unthinkable without the science of photographic chemistry and cinema itself in turn has advanced imaging and colour science." Without due scientific rigour in testing chemical elements in the surviving film prints we would miss subtle uses of colour practices like tinting and toning, which were manipulated in expressionistic ways to change mood or even indicate temporal shifts such as flashbacks, or imagined sequences. This technique has resurfaced in more recent films like *The Matrix* (1999), which uses its blue-green colour scheme in a comparable way. Let's hope some future archivist knows enough to interpret this as a creative alternative to the dominant teal and orange colour palette of 21st-century Hollywood film and not a data error. They won't have chemistry to fall back on by then. ☹

– the radar dishes in *The Angelic Conversation* (1985), Tilda Swinton's Hitlerian microphone in *Edward II*, the foregrounded grain of super 8 projected and reshot or run through video – transforms the relentless intimacy of his home videos from a self-consciously minority art to the precarious seizure of the means and powers of the spectacle. The social outcasts with whom Jarman identified had, in the persons of Jordan and Ant and the Sex Pistols and innumerable others, stepped out on to the stage, and the film recoiled and fractured with the image of ruination and vitality they represented.

Mark Sinker has acutely characterised *Jubilee* as "an impasto of clashing symbol and mood and technique and sensibility: the perverse and deliberately bewildering fusion of past and present, art and politics, documentary and fiction, actors and non-actors, rubbish and beauty". It shared this sensibility with the most brilliant pop music of the period: Borgia Ginz's mansion is twinned in my mind with the decadent bachelor pads of Bryan Ferry's narrators on Roxy Music's *For Your Pleasure* (1973). And, though more uneasily, with the echoing hospital wards and headspaces of *Blue* (1993) – a 'musical' if ever there was one. Most of Simon Fisher Turner's score to *Blue* is possessed of a listing, immersive melancholy, filled with shimmering cymbals and singing bowls and echo-drowned brass and woodwinds, that aligns with Coil's soundtracks for *A Journey to Avebury* (1972) and *The Angelic Conversation*. *Blue*'s collaging of voices, music and field recordings, its outrageous transitions between passages of watery calm and juddering noise, between mourning and libidinous overload – as Coil's hallucinatory acid house 'Theme For Blue' revs into life – is the most radical of Jarman's career, an achievement to match his furious fluency with the image. But, with *Jubilee*, it is also the soundtrack that pays most attention to the image – to the blankness, ambiguity and multiple meanings of the static image of blue, to the sensuous folds and false depths the viewer perceives after staring for so long, and to the voiceover's descriptions of the brutal politics of the Aids crisis, of ordinary intimacy, of remembered landscapes. Watching, I think of the blue and red montage of Jordan's make-up, that ferocious and contradictory statement of independence, in *Jubilee*, and of the music – the blues – that so fiercely laments the dangers and pleasures of a disappearing world. ☹

i 'Queer Pagan Punk: Derek Jarman' runs at BFI Southbank until the end of March



Pop royalty: Annie Lennox in *Edward II*

The barriers to restoration of films in their original colours are breaking, revealing how many early films were in colour – up to 80 per cent in the 1900s

TRUST ME, I'M AN ARTIST

With her installation-based video work, Turner Prize-winner Laure Prouvost aims less to depict than to convince, or even beguile

By Melissa Gronlund

"Words are very powerful," says this year's Turner Prize winner, the artist-filmmaker Laure Prouvost. "They can create an object in your mind, in a vague or specific way, different to how it exists in reality." Working mainly in video and installation, Prouvost's work is engineered towards creating fictions in the mind of her audience. Her videos often address the viewer directly, cajoling, exhorting or even seducing him or her. "You'll feel richer after watching this video," she whispers in *For Forgetting* (2014), which will premiere in February at her New Museum show in New York. In the video *Swallow* (2013), made after winning the Max Mara Art Prize for Women, Prouvost intones: "You are in the middle there, in the middle of these women, in the image." In *Monolog* (2009), she apologises for the state of the room: "I did ask for it to be nicer."

In many ways, Prouvost's work can be described as illusionist in character. She seeks to convince as much as to depict, to produce an experience as much as to represent a scene. The inventions she dispenses are often so outlandish that they are obviously false, but she maintains their veracity both inside and outside the gallery. Best known among these is her grandfather the conceptual artist, who in the performance *Grandad* (2011) she claimed was stuck down a tunnel. This fiction was refined for the installation *Wantee* (2013), one of the works for which she won the Turner Prize, in which she alleged her grandfather had been the best friend of the Dada artist Kurt Schwitters, and that it was because of this familial connection that she was commissioned by Tate Britain to make the work ("Not because I'm a good artist," she says). The resulting video and installation shows her rearranging her grandfather's imagined subterranean abode, stocked with still-lives and portraits given to him by Schwitters. (Schwitters, to make money while living in exile in Norway before World War II, would sell generic paintings to American and British tourists on cruise boats going up the Norwegian coastline.)

It goes without saying that her grandfather and the tunnel, his connection to Schwitters and the Tate's reasons for commissioning her are all falsehoods—a veil of fiction drawn over the installation, which addresses how art writes its own history. "Art would never accept Schwitters's portraits and still-lives as serious works," she says. "It writes its own trajectory—a selective one." The fiction of the grandfather extends beyond *Wantee*. When she won the Turner Prize, she included a shout-out to him in her acceptance speech: "I hope my grandad is hearing us right now," she said. "Down there in the tunnel... there might be waves."

This note of whimsy is in keeping with the French artist's persona. Her videos, often featuring Prouvost herself as the narrator, are made of odd assemblages of images, from the abject to the



Laure Prouvost holding one of the signs that accompany screenings at her installations

mundane, whose juxtapositions suggest that we are never far from the unseemly or the beautiful: a computer dangle lying in the countryside; images of lavishly photographed food from crumpled magazines; spiders dangling; underarm hair blowing in the wind. Playing off her unfamiliarity with the English language (Prouvost was born in France but has been based in London since art school), she makes deliberate mistakes that strike a note of generosity and wonder, both as narrator and in the hand-painted signs that accompany her installations. "Ideally [sic] this sign would take you in its arms," reads one. "Ideally behind this wall be [sic] a hot spring with beautiful naked women swimming." Others are more poetic,

prompting impossible but striking images. Placed above a regular running shoe, one sign from *Swallow* reads: "This is the shoe found being carried by hundreds of butterfly [sic] from Italy to central London on the day of st [sic] Buitono."

Swallow, which was made in Italy, looks at different forms of pleasure, via shots of flowers, clear skies, young women swimming in a waterfall, and hands full of plump raspberries, among others. A soundtrack of heavy breathing runs throughout: the video explores pleasure in all senses. Moreover, it seeks to both represent it and inspire it directly in the viewer. "I wanted the audience to feel like they were in Italy themselves," she said, "instead of being in cold

London.” For the Q&As that accompanied each exhibition, Prouvost commissioned an opera singer to translate the conversations into soaring Italian arias, putting everyday reality and high art, not to mention the cliché of overly dramatic Italy, into literal comparison.

When it was exhibited at the Whitechapel Gallery in London and the Collezione Maramotti in Reggio Emilia, Italy, *Swallow* had two parts: the video and a built structure. Shaped like a key, the structure contained a screening area for the video within its rectangular end, and rounded walls provided something like an entrance hall. Prouvost papered this small arena with various drawings and magazine cut-outs on the same theme, of forms of pleasure, as the video, though the sexual subtext was slightly more explicit – people licking ice cream, an image of a woman in an extremely high-cut blue bathing suit on a bicycle – and the feel of the images less polished and precise. Beyond the structure, shelves affixed to the walls proffered raspberries: Prouvost wanted the audience to literally take part in the sensory experience of the work, to break down, in a small way, the gap between art and life.

Other works by Prouvost have used the same technique of accompanying a video with props from its diegesis. Her six-part video *Wanderer* (2012) was based on a translation of Kafka’s ‘Metamorphosis’ by a writer who does not know German (the artist Rory Macbeth). When it was exhibited in gallery spaces, Prouvost created labyrinthine cardboard structures to echo the sense of disorientation in which the video’s protagonist found himself, and laid out sneakers which the viewer could try on in order to run like the characters in the video. *Wantee*, too, brought the scene on film into the exhibition space itself, laying out a table and tea cups in front of the screen. (‘Wantee’ was the nickname Schwitters gave to his muse, Edith Thomas, who was always asking visitors if they wanted tea.)

This move of bringing the exhibition space into the fiction of the film – or, conversely, bringing the fiction of the film into the reality of the exhibition space – is one of the most intriguing elements of Prouvost’s practice, and one she shares with a number of young filmmakers, such as Ryan Trecartin, Shana Moulton or Nat Mellors. It happens in some ways as a response to the immateriality of working in digital film: a holdover from the material fascination of late 20th-century experimental film (the structuralist investigation of film



Swallow has been screened in a specially constructed pleasure-themed installation space

Like some of her peers, Prouvost gets closer to her audience by bringing the fiction of the film into the reality of the exhibition space

as film, for example), or indeed from the fact that many of these young filmmakers trained as artists. It clearly underlines the lack of separation for young artists between working as filmmakers and working as artists. There is a desire to tell stories, in whatever medium.

For Prouvost especially, it also suggests a proximity to the audience and attention to their viewing conditions that cannot be accomplished by the cinema model of shipping out a print. Her video *Monolog* thematises this: it involves her speaking to the audience about their experience of watching the video. With the image on screen only showing her torso, she explains that she wishes the screen had been just a little wider and taller. She points out how dark it is in the cinema (then helpfully turns on a light in the film) and remarks that if the viewer

wants to have a cigarette, they can go ahead. “If you get in trouble, just tell them I told you you could.” Prouvost is witty and charming, if a little supercilious. “Because I’m here on screen, I will never age... but you, you’re ageing, even here, watching this, you’re getting old. But I’m happy we’re here together.” Activating the space between the screen and the viewer a means not to make the viewer aware of the illusion of the cinema, but to deepen this illusion, mixing reality and fiction further, and draw the fiction or the experience of the video into the life of the viewer. “In some ways they act as some sort of relic or proof that it really happened,” she says about the use of installation props. “It’s not just a film or a story – it’s here, look, you are part of it.”

Prouvost’s bid to give her fictions shape in reality is also part of a greater impulse to valorise the marginal and to pick up what’s been overlooked, like the portraits that she hangs on the wall in *Wantee*. “So often we forget what we are doing,” she says, referring to the everyday joys her films draw on. “It’s simple, but I want to call attention back to that.” Her video for the New Museum, still in production, concentrates on the reasons for watching (and making) art. Promising a video that is made “just for you”, as she says to her unnamed viewer, it questions what a viewer seeks to gain by sitting and watching a video in the dark.

Indeed one at times gets the feeling that for Prouvost the greatest success would be if someone got up, switched off the monitor, knocked open the doors and left the room. As she said about the Q&A performance for *Swallow*: “Sometimes art falls short of real life.”

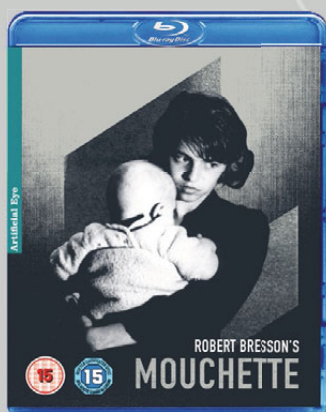
i **Laure Prouvost’s work will be shown in ‘... all silent but for the buzzing...’ at the RCA, London, 6-25 March. *Wantee* is part of the Turner Prize Homecoming exhibition, Ruskin Museum, Cumbria, to 9 March**



The Wanderer, loosely based on Kafka



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Reviews



84 **Love Is in the Air**

'Love Is in the Air' does not pretend to approach the heights of its American romcom models. Nevertheless, as fits this tradition, the film crackles along thanks to the delightful Ludivine Sagnier, the snappy dialogue and some excellent character actors



72 Films of the month



78 Films



94 Home Cinema



104 Books



Outbreaks of tenderness: Vincent Lindon as Marco in *Bastards*

Bastards

France/Germany 2013

Director: Claire Denis

Certificate 18 100m 25s

See feature
on page 48

Reviewed by Nick Pinkerton
Spoiler alert: this review reveals a plot twist

"I did it for my family." It's the excuse that ennobles and partly vindicates almost any villainy in the eyes of the world. It's the justification of the super-rich – let those who can't take care of their own starve, I'm just providing for my family. These worst aspects of family, as a pretext for overriding common decency and as a gnawing sense of predestination, are at the heart of Claire Denis's harrowing, haunted *Bastards*.

Denis, dealing here with the same innate bond viewed more benevolently in her *Nenette and Boni* (1996) and *35 Shots of Rum* (2008), has made some of the most intimate movies that there are. In her films, the frame – guided by her long-time collaborator and other half, DP Agnès Godard – gets into snug places that

cameras usually don't penetrate. Godard is one of Denis's troupe of regular collaborators, which also includes co-scenarist Jean-Pol Fargeau, the band Tindersticks and actors Grégoire Colin, Alex Descas and Michel Subor, all of whom have returned for this, Denis's 12th feature.

Vincent Lindon was the authentically weatherbeaten stranger in Denis's *Vendredi soir* (2002). Here he plays tight-lipped, brooding Marco Silvestri, stray scion of a family of Franco-Italian shoe manufacturers. Marco abandoned the family firm years ago, running off to join the merchant marine, but he is called back into the fold in middle age when he learns that his sister Sandra (Julie Bataille) and her teenage daughter Justine (Lola Créton) have fallen on hard times after the suicide of his brother-in-law Jacques, who ran the business into the ground. And so Marco returns to Paris, vaguely intending to take revenge on Edouard Laporte (Subor), the wealthy financier Sandra blames for the family's plight.

When we first encounter Marco he is at sea, afloat on water as white and bright as the crisp new dress shirts he favours. Our first views of Paris are similarly awash with water, but the rain pouring down is black, viscous, greasy.

Looking for answers, Marco will go down among the junkies and prostitutes, the dark and malevolent backstreets of the City of Light. As the man on a mission, Lindon gives a terse performance lashed by outbreaks of violent tenderness, and so is perfectly matched to Denis's brusque cutting, which stages scenes as a series of scourging flurries and hurried retreats.

In the film's first ten minutes, its principal theme is dropped in in offhand fashion. Edouard's mistress Raphaëlle (Chiara Mastroianni) returns to her apartment building – where Marco is also now living – and briefly chats with the



Michel Subor



made literal in Denis's *Trouble Every Day* (2001), in which the logical endpoint of sexual hunger is the need to actually consume a partner. In *Bastards*, Denis takes another concept, that of family, to the furthest, most extreme precipice. Or perhaps winnows it down to the basic element at its heart: smashing family into the wall of incest.

Of her casting for *Bastards* Denis has said, "I wanted to have all the women dark-haired, Mediterranean... Everything had to be Mediterranean, tragic." She is referring to Electra and Greek tragedy, to the stuff of myth, while also understanding that every family has its own, deeply internalised private mythology. Denis has spoken too of the influence of William Faulker, of Yoknapatawpha County and its genealogical determinism. And Marco might well agree with a sentiment penned by another southern writer, Tennessee Williams, whose imagination was forever overshadowed by the family archetypes of his upbringing: "I tried to leave you behind me, but I am more faithful than I intended to be."

Such are the suffocating ties that bind. When Justine first appears wobbling down the street in the aftermath of her rape, she's nude save for a pair of high heels. The diminished Silvestri fortune was made from the manufacture of women's shoes, and even when Justine has been stripped of everything else, these incongruous heels remain. Like Marco, Justine is a would-be runaway – but you can't run far in heels. Marco got a little further, turning down his share of the inheritance and travelling to the ends of the earth to forget his past and his birthright, like one of the legionnaires in Denis's *Beau Travail* (1999). He even pawns a keepsake watch whose inscription reads, "To my son who sails the seas" – but by then he's already been caught in the undertow of familial duty.

The more that Marco learns while investigating his family's reversal of fortunes, the more he believes that volatile Sandra's blaming external forces for their downfall is a convenient simplification, that his bloodline has a curse on it. "I'm glad I divorced," Marco says after discovering the dirty secret behind Justine's trauma. "My girls won't be contaminated."



Chiara Mastroianni

Edouard echoes Marco's sense of carrying a toxicity, expressing to Raphaëlle the need to protect his "last seed" from Marco's "sick family".

Marco's growing conviction that his blood is tainted is a self-fulfilling prophecy: he will be the end of his family line and the Silvestri name. Justine dies on the side of a country road, while Loiret Caille's pregnant slattern drags herself out of the wreckage, assuring that her own seed will take root. Marco is shot by Raphaëlle, for only by proving her loyalty to Edouard will she be able to watch her son grow up, and this is how she makes her choice between a mere lover and her own flesh and blood. "He's the bastard," Marco earlier says of Edouard, though Raphaëlle and Edouard's son is the literal bastard, and only Marco's execution can legitimise him. Marco, by abandoning his family, has made a bastard of himself, and even Raphaëlle was something of an orphan before taking her older lover, telling Marco, "I had no ties. I was floating." The only solid patriarch in sight is Edouard, contentedly plumped in the back of a chauffeured car rather than trying to steer himself, secure in the belief that his own bloodline will prosper through the draining of others. As the man says to Raphaëlle: "It's normal. It's family." ☹

Marco's growing conviction that his blood is tainted is a self-fulfilling prophecy: he will be the end of his family line

nephew of the ailing super. "It's nice of you to help out," she says. "It's normal," he responds, "It's family." Laying out her story through such oblique strategies, Denis makes intricate set pieces from seemingly unpromising material – Marco throwing down a packet of cigarettes to Raphaëlle after watching her turned away from a shuttered corner shop, for example, or the two having sex on the landing of the stairwell between their flats. The ostensible action sequences, meanwhile, are deliberately clumsy and murky, though the propulsive power of the automobile – vehicle of destiny? – is given perfect clarity. The presence of the engine in Marco's sports car fills the cinema, and there's a nightmare lucidity to Justine's fatal night drive into the void, headlights off, in the company of the same two smut-mongers (Colin and Florence Loiret Caille) who have earlier overseen her rape.

The intimacy of Denis's style is matched by the way she burrows into her subject matter. There's something almost subcutaneous about her films, which turns bodies into vast topographies, presenting flesh so tactile and tempting that the camera seems to be grazing on the skin it photographs. This carnivorous tendency was

Credits and Synopsis

Produced by
Laurence Clerc
Olivier Thierry-Lapiney
Brahim Chioua
Vincent Maraval
Screenplay
Jean-Pol Fargeau
Claire Denis
Director of Photography
Agnès Godard
Editor
Annette Dutertre
Art Direction
Michel Barthélémy
Original Music by/ Performed by
Tindersticks
Sound
Martin Boissau
Christophe Winding
Sandie Bompar
Christophe Vingtrinier
Costumes
Judy Shrewsbury

©Wild Bunch,
Alcatraz Films, Arte
France Cinéma,
Pandora Films
Production
Production

Companies
Produced by Alcatraz
Films and Wild Bunch
in co-production
with Pandora Film
Produktion, Arte
France Cinéma
in association with
Palatine Étoile
10, Soficinéma
9, Indéfilms
with the participation
of Canal+, Ciné+,
Arte France, Arte
Geie and ZDF/Arte
and Centre National
du Cinéma et de
l'Image Animée CNC
with the support of
Région Île-de-France
in partnership
with the CNC

CAST

Vincent Lindon
Marco Silvestri
Chiara Mastroianni
Raphaëlle
Julie Bataille
Sandra
Michel Subor

Edouard Laporte
Grégoire Colin
Xavier
Lola Créton
Justine
Alex Descas
Dr Béthanie
Florence Loiret
Caille
Elysée
Laurent Gréville
Jacques

Dolby Digital
In Colour
[1.85:1]
Subtitles

Distributor
Artificial Eye Film
Company

9,037 ft +8 frames

French theatrical title
Les Salauds

Paris, present day. Jacques, the head of the Silvestri shoe company, commits suicide. His brother-in-law Marco is a merchant marine captain who long ago gave up control of the company. Now Marco returns to Paris to help his grieving sister Sandra and niece Justine; the latter has been hospitalised following a mysterious trauma of a sexual nature. Sandra blames wealthy financier Edouard Laporte for the family's dashed fortunes. Vaguely planning to take revenge on Edouard, Marco rents a flat in the same building as Raphaëlle, Edouard's mistress and the mother of his son. Marco initiates an affair with Raphaëlle. While investigating Justine's association with a seedy couple of pornographers, Xavier and Elysée, Marco begins to suspect that Sandra is more culpable for what has happened to her daughter than she lets on. Edouard discovers Raphaëlle's infidelity and takes their son away from her. Justine escapes from hospital but dies in a car accident during a druggy night drive with Xavier and Elysée. Edouard reappears and declares that he is terminating all contact with Raphaëlle; he struggles with Marco in the process. Raphaëlle shoots Marco dead, thus proving her loyalty to Edouard and regaining her right to see her son. Sandra watches a contraband porno film made by Xavier and Elysée and sees Justine forced into an abusive sexual situation with her own father, Jacques.

An Oversimplification of Her Beauty

USA 2012

Director: Terence Nance

Certificate 12A 84m 19s

See interview
on page 10

Reviewed by Ashley Clark

Frankly, it's difficult to know where to begin when attempting to unravel the mysteries of Terence Nance's unclassifiable

debut feature, *An Oversimplification of Her Beauty*. Hyperbolic adjectives such as dizzying, effervescent, kaleidoscopic and exhilarating spring to mind but don't adequately convey the craft and persistence that have gone into this confessional slice of (semi) non-fiction.

Broadly speaking, it's about the vagaries of a romantic relationship seen from the point of view of its director/star, who plays a likely heightened version of himself (don't we all when we're looking to woo a partner?) and who winningly combines the silver-tongued charm of 17th-century metaphysical poet Andrew Marvell with the neuroses of *Annie Hall*-era Woody Allen and the raw-nerve open-heartedness of a *Big Brother* contestant in the diary room. Six years in the making – and finally emerging in the UK two years after its debut at the Sundance festival – it's a colourful, diaristic collage of documentary, direct address, fictionalised memory, animation and diverse musical choices. Clearly influenced by the structurally elastic, meta-yet-heartfelt films of Charlie Kaufman and Michel Gondry (2004's *Eternal Sunshine of the Spotless Mind* in particular), *An Oversimplification* is nevertheless a *sui generis* work so intricate that it possesses a built-in replay value. The one thing it isn't is oversimplified.

Yet it begins in straightforward enough fashion. A series of rhythmically edited handheld shots track the journey of a fashionable, impressively afro'd young man (Nance) from the New York subway system to his front door. The scene seems set for a low-key, observational drama about a striving urbanite, but the rug is pulled when the crisp digital image flickers with a conspicuously analogue fray, before pausing altogether. This is the first of many playful formal tricks Nance will employ as he poetically reflects the complex essence of unrequited affection. A voiceover (delivered in honeyed *basso profundo* by former *The Wire* star Reg E. Cathey) politely apologises for the interruption and explains that we're not currently watching *An Oversimplification of Her Beauty* at all, but rather a short film entitled 'How Would You Feel?', made by Nance back in 2006. This film, we are told, will "examine how humans come to experience a singular emotion". The emotion in question, we will soon discover, is love, and the object of Nance's affection is his friend, collaborator and muse Namik Minter, with whom he shares an easy charisma but a vexingly complex relationship.

The 'How Would You Feel?' segment is a wonder of narrative elasticity, constantly folding in on itself to arrive at the same juncture: the posing of the eponymous question on the voiceover. Nance uses a second-person narration to offset the potential voyeurism of watching someone agonise over being stood up, and this helps to include viewers rather than alienate them. The sequences from *An Oversimplification of Her Beauty* – so titled because Nance worries that

he will reduce the complexity of his romantic interest in order to help himself forget her – offer Minter more of a platform (including a snippet of her own film). But Nance is under no illusion that this is a skewed portrait, referring to it as "one-sided non-fiction". When Nance isn't puzzling over Minter, he's casting his mind back to loves lost, *High Fidelity*-style, but with the blokey, meat-and-potatoes lists of Nick Hornby's universe superseded by sketches, doodles and photographs that morph into illustrated titles and trippy animations.

If such heightened self-referentiality sounds off-putting, it should be noted that Nance displays an uncanny ability to tiptoe to the precipice of maudlin solipsism and pull back thrillingly at the last moment with a rapier-like act of self-effacement, if not outright self-deprecation. It also helps that Nance is charismatic, photogenic and calm; one of the film's consistent – if not necessarily intentional – sources of amusement is that the incessant flurry of creativity and self-doubt buzzing inside Nance's head is offset by his languidly upbeat demeanour. Consequently, the film is neither knuckle-suckingly excruciating to watch in the manner of Chris Witt's tangentially similar *A Complete History of My Sexual Failures* (2008), nor overtly stressful like the claustrophobic self-excoriation of Jonathan Caouette's influential *Tarnation* (2003). *An Oversimplification* is a joy because its creator's romantic frailties are inextricably bound up with his restlessly creative art. Even when Nance's words are morose, the pile-up of poetic, often hallucinatory images tell a contradictory tale: an animated tree blossoming into the shape of a beautiful woman's face, a shot of the Brooklyn Bridge at dusk imperceptibly slowed down so that the passing sun-strafted clouds move to the rhythm of Nance's voice. The images, and their rapidly changing forms, have a teasingly tactile quality, begging us to unpack and interpret them.

Nance's film also offers a smart, playful peek into how the challenges of romantic communication have metastasised along with the rapid growth of technology. There's a lovely blink-and-you'll-miss-it moment when Minter, in one of the film's more obviously fictionalised passages, pauses to send a text message to Nance – one that will ultimately cause him no end of emotional confusion. The camera peeks over her shoulder as she signs off the message "I think I love you" – first with a comma as though she has more to say, then changing her mind and adding a full-stop. Finally,



Caught in his gaze: Terence Nance

however, she goes with a question mark. What's the difference? Is there one? Why did it her take so long to decide? (Incidentally, there's a very similar moment in Andrew Haigh's *Weekend*, an equally tactile and perceptive film about fleeting love.)

Elsewhere, *An Oversimplification of Her Beauty* doesn't make an explicit theme of 'blackness', so to speak, but is nevertheless refreshing for its cultural specificity. In one of the funniest moments, Nance laments his poor punctuality, and claims that he runs on "Afrocentric time"; this wry observation is matched with a hilarious




Namik Minter



hospital-set animation of Nance point-blank refusing to emerge from his mother's womb. The wacky, fluid and cosmic animation, which seems inspired by everyone from Jean-Michel Basquiat to Sun Ra and Barkley L. Hendricks, helps push the film into Afrofuturist territory (the term, coined by Mark Dery, encompasses the work of multimedia artists interested in projecting black futures). Meanwhile the flexible score – running the gamut from evocative, ancient blues to the subtle sci-fi soundscapes of experimental hip-hop producer Flying Lotus – pays aurally satisfying homage to black musical tradition.

An Oversimplification of Her Beauty is also plugged into a lineage of black-authored art cinema, from William Greaves's playfully countercultural meta-*vérités* *Symbiopsychotaxiplasm: Take One* (1968) and *Symbiopsychotaxiplasm Take 2½* (2005) to Wendell B. Harris's tonally darker *Chameleon Street* (1989), with which it shares a relentlessly verbose – though never alienating – voiceover and an omnipresent sense of its author's intelligence. Yet perhaps most of all it recalls Spike Lee's *She's Gotta Have It* (1986), which made an impression not just because it was funny and formally adventurous but because it focused on a topic hitherto woefully under-represented in cinematic terms: romantic relationships between young creative black Americans (for contrast, consider the geyser of low-budget indies in the past decade to focus on the emotional tangles of wan, pasty dreamers). Lee was never so playful as in his debut, and save

Six years in the making, it's a colourful, diaristic collage of documentary, direct address, fictionalised memory and animation

for a few little-seen exceptions along the way (including Barry Jenkins's 2008 sober drama *Medicine for Melancholy*, as yet unreleased in the UK) the subject has remained more or less untouched. As such, Nance's film feels like a long-overdue and utterly thrilling grasping of the nettle. It will be fascinating to see where this evidently talented, multifaceted artist goes next. 

Credits and Synopsis

Produced by
Chanelle Aponte
Pearson
Andrew D. Corkin
James Bartlett
Terence Nance
Written by
Terence Nance
Inspired by
Namik Minter
Cinematography
Matthew E. Bray
Shawn Peters

Edited by
Terence Nance
Art Direction
Terence Nance
Original Music
Terence Nance
Flying Lotus
Sound Design
Vincent Wheeler
Animation Direction
Terence Nance
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Production Companies
Media MVMT presents
a Variance Films and
Cinema Guild release
Executive produced
by Media MVMT
Co-executive
produced by Museum
of Contemporary
African Diasporan Arts
With support from The
Sundance Institute,

Cinereach Feature
Film Fellowship, The
IFP Narrative Lab
Made by members
of the cinema stereo
filmmakers collective
Executive Produced by
Wyatt Cenac
Joy Bryant
Paul Bernon
Jason Weissman

CAST
Chanelle Aponte
Pearson
amalgam
Terence Nance
Terence
Vickie Washington
Mother
JC Cain
Aunt JC
Reg E. Cathey
Terence Nance

Onyinyechi Amanze
Namik Minter
narrators

In Colour
[1.78:1]

Distributor
Of Her Beauty LLC

7,588 ft +8 frames

A non-fiction film set mostly in New York between 2006 and 2010. A young man is seen riding on the subway, then walking home. When he reaches his front door, the frame freezes and a voiceover informs us that we are watching footage from 'How Would You Feel?' (2006), a short film directed by Terence Nance (the man in the frame), and that this film was originally intended as a work of fiction. The voiceover explains that 'How Would You Feel?' will be periodically interrupted by a new film, 'An Oversimplification of Her Beauty', in order to tell a complete story.

'How Would You Feel?' comprises four parts and

focuses on Nance's reaction to being rejected by a young woman named Namik Minter, with whom he has been in a tentative relationship. 'An Oversimplification of Her Beauty' comprises three parts, in which Nance catalogues his previous relationships and analyses his actions and feelings (these sequences are largely animated). We see footage of Nance at a public screening of 'How Would You Feel?' and then taking part in a post-screening Q&A session with Minter; we also see Nance assisting Minter with her response film, 'Subtext'. Further animations and annotations are interspersed throughout.



Dangerous liaisons: Christophe Paou as Michel and Pierre Deladonchamps as Franck in *Stranger by the Lake*

Stranger by the Lake

France 2013

Director: Alain Guiraudie

Certificate 18 100m 3s

See feature
on page 28

Reviewed by Ben Walters
Spoiler alert: this review
reveals a plot twist

There can be something quite awful about the sun on the water. The sparkle and dazzle of the light as it plays across the ever-changing surface of the depths – there's beauty there, of course, but also power, danger and unaccountability, the coming together of forces massively indifferent to human pleasure, malice, ecstasy or destruction. So bright. So deep. So easy to lose one's bearings or, having slid beneath the waves, to seem never to have been there at all. An ideal setting for sex or killing.

Plein soleil (1960), *Knife in the Water* (1962), *Le Mépris* (1963), *Dead Calm* (1989), *The Talented Mr Ripley* (1999) – all have exploited this awful allure to good effect. Now, *Stranger by the Lake*, from French director Alain Guiraudie, unites this particular nexus of beauty and jeopardy with another, that of the gay subculture suspense thriller (a subgenre probably still typified by the 1980 Al Pacino movie *Cruising*). Franck (Pierre Deladonchamps) spends his summer days

hanging out at a lakeside cruising spot, its bright beach and clear water punctuated by mostly nude men idling the time away in conversation, eyeing each other up and occasionally repairing to the nearby hilly woodland for a friendly fumble. Franck spends a good bit of time in platonic conversation with Henri (Patrick d'Assumção), a middle-aged man whose wife has recently left him. But really he has eyes only for Michel (Christophe Paou), the handsome, moustachioed newcomer whose allure remains intact – or is it even enhanced? – when Franck witnesses him coolly drowning his current beau, Pascal (François-Renaud Labarthe). Succumbing, it seems, to a kind of *folie de la plage*, Franck embarks on an intense affair with Michel even as Henri flags up the danger and a police inspector (Jérôme Chappatte) starts sniffing around.

Though not well known beyond a band of devotees on the festival circuit, Guiraudie has been building a distinctive oeuvre for more than a decade now, showing particular interest in exterior locations and interior dislocations: his camera gets out and about while his stories mess with the insides of his characters', and audiences', heads. He's a Cannes favourite: *Stranger by the Lake* took both the director's prize in Un Certain Regard and the Queer Palm in 2013, while three previous features have played in Directors' Fortnight. In the first of these, 2003's *No Rest for the Brave*, a teenager becomes convinced that he'll

die if he falls asleep; he is soon pursued across the *campagne* by forces of both order and criminality, is associated with killings, finds the cohesion of his identity compromised and sees his lover subsumed by water. In *Time Has Come* (2005), factions of an imaginary feudal society of warriors and shepherds are at each other's throats, slippage everywhere evident in relationships, loyalties and personalities. The gay sexuality fairly casually incorporated into such works became more central in 2009's *The King of Escape*, even as a sense of mutability and a rural setting remained: a few years into his forties, Ludovic Berthillot's Armand decides that gay life is unfulfilling and that he might as well give heterosexuality a go. Here too the tone is fluid and dreamlike and the power of sex explored unconventionally.

Stranger by the Lake is perhaps less of a headscratcher than some of Guiraudie's earlier work, in that there is no ambiguity about the characters' location or identity. Yet it shimmers with that intoxicating sun-on-the-water allure that might make someone not quite themselves. A large part of the film's effectiveness is down to its roster of self-imposed formal limitations, which concentrate the attention into a kind of conceptual and narrative tunnel vision. It uses only exterior shots, only natural light and only a handful of locations, all in the immediate vicinity of the lake. It features only men. It includes almost no close-ups or music, relying on compositions



Set entirely within a special zone that comes with its own norms, the film shimmers with that intoxicating sun-on-the-water allure that might make someone not quite themselves

incorporating the natural environment and sound design foregrounding wind and waves. It takes place over ten days, almost all of them marked by an establishing shot of the car park used by the lake's visitors; these shots, like others repeated as the days pass, take on a weird double valence as the story continues, suggestive both of a ticking clock and a *Groundhog Day*-style stasis.

At first the film's hermetic quality helps set the terms of a special zone to which we must acclimatise ourselves – one with its own norms of nudity, sociability, jealousy and discretion. As if learning a language, we find total submersion conducive to quick learning. Later, this hermetic quality becomes more claustrophobic. Even early on, there are rumours of peril – a killer in the area, a beastie in the lake – but once we have seen Pascal's death and Franck's decision to abet rather than report Michel, the film's formal restraint enhances the sense of psychological closing-in that falls over the action. The arrival of the police inspector, for instance, signals a definite change in the quality of the environment – a chilling effect, despite his ostensibly unprepossessing demeanour – but there is no question that he is a visitor on alien turf.

The sense of tunnel vision is also apt for a story whose main character pretty much thinks with his dick – or is at least in the throes of infatuation. Gay sexuality, so often present in Guiraudie's work in intriguingly incidental ways, here becomes an all-encompassing milieu. The male bodies on display offer a range of types, some more conventionally appealing than others, and sexual encounters are a running background reality; those seen up close are few in number but explicit (body doubles were used). An initial frisson of titillation soon gives way to normalisation – there's neither sensationalism nor judgement here, just an observed choreography of glances, movements and negotiated engagements. The combination of sex and death in a gay context inevitably hints at Aids, and Franck and Michel's decision not to use condoms could be construed as risky business, perhaps akin to the former's dalliance with the latter once he has seen him kill – but a character who does insist on condoms for oral sex is made a bit absurd. If anything, emotional connection is seen to be the more important factor: the moments when we feel Franck is really playing with fire are those in which he presses Michel towards a more intimate relationship; conversely, Franck's social neglect of Henri sets

more alarm bells ringing than his pursuit of sexual pleasure. Unlike in, say, *Cruising*, there's no sustained implication here of a death wish inherent in the urge to fuck another man.

Rather, the film's key moment, Franck's original sin, is one of voyeurism: he watches from a distance, in the near-dark, as a murder plays out amid the light on the water and he does nothing to intervene. It's an extraordinary incident, shown in a single long take as we, next to Franck, watch two men's apparent play turning into a struggle during which one of them is held under for too long. Then, as the victim conspicuously fails to resurface, we see the killer swim back to shore, emerge on to the beach, get dressed and walk towards and eventually past us, ultimately unchallenged. It's the establishment of a complicity that can't end well. But perhaps the willingness, even the desire to succumb to the mad spectacle – to find oneself agreeing to abdicate agency and identity, to make excuses for a charismatic killer, to find a kind of pleasurable release in giving free rein to unconscionable impulses – isn't so very alien. It's a version, after all, of what we do when we take our seats in the cinema, waiting to be dazzled. 📺

Credits and Synopsis

Produced by
Sylvie Pialat
Screenplay
Alain Guiraudie
Director of Photography
Claire Mathon
Editor
Jean-Christophe Hym
Art Directors
Roy Genty
François Labarthe
Laurent Lunetta
Sound
Philippe Grivel
Nathalie Vidal
Costumes
Roy Genty
François Labarthe

©Les Films du Worso, Arte France Cinéma, M141 Productions, Films de Force Majeure
Production Companies
Produced by Les

Films du Worso
In co-production with Arte France Cinéma, M141 and Films de Force Majeure
In association with Cinéimage 7 and Soficinéma 9
With the participation of Arte France and Centre National du Cinéma et de l'Image Animée
With the support of Région Provence-Alpes-Côte d'Azur in partnership with CNC

Cast

Pierre Deladonchamps
Franck
Christophe Paou
Michel
Patrick D'Assunção
Henri
Jérôme Chappatte

Inspector Damroder
Mathieu Verisch
Eric
Sébastien Badachoui
Eric's boyfriend
Gilles Guérin
ladies' man
François Labarthe
Pascal Ramière

In Colour
[2.35:1]
Subtitles

Distributor
Peccadillo Pictures Ltd

9,004 ft +8 frames

French theatrical title
L'Inconnu du lac

France, the present. Franck is one of many men who spend their summer days on the shores of a lake, swimming, sunbathing and cruising for casual sex. Amid rumours of a murderer at large, Franck gets to know Henri, a middle-aged man whose wife has recently left him. He also spots the handsome Michel, who seems to be in a relationship with another man, Pascal.

One evening, watching the otherwise deserted beach from afar, Franck sees Michel drown Pascal. He keeps this secret and begins an affair with Michel. When Pascal's body is found, a police inspector arrives to investigate. Franck admits his presence at the lake the evening of the death but denies seeing anything amiss. Franck and Michel continue their affair – although, to Franck's frustration, it remains restricted to encounters by the lake. Henri, disappointed at the cooling of his and Franck's friendship, tries to warn Franck off Michel. He insinuates to both Franck and Michel that Michel is the killer, then goes into the woods. Soon afterwards, Franck notes Michel's absence. In the woods, he finds Henri with his throat slit; as Henri had in fact hoped, Michel has killed him. Franck flees in panic, pursued by Michel; as Franck hides, he spies Michel killing the inspector. He remains hidden while Michel tries to find him. Night falls.



Christophe Paou, Pierre Deladonchamps

Bounty Killer

USA 2012
Director: Henry Saine
Certificate 18 92m 33s

Reviewed by Kim Newman

Based on a graphic novel, this scrappy, inventive, low-budget science-fiction action film is in the line of descent from the *Mad Max* imitations of the early 1980s by way of satirical efforts such as *Cherry 2000* (1987) and *Six-String Samurai* (1998).

Every generation of exploitation reinvents the apocalypse to reflect its own concerns, and *Bounty Killer* abjures nuclear war, climate change and eco-doom in favour of an economic collapse brought about by unrestrained, demented capitalism. Admittedly, this is mostly an excuse to pit its fetish-garbed, gun-toting heroine against 'white-collar criminals' – squirming managers in suits who nevertheless pack plentiful weaponry or have martial-arts skills enough to put up a fight before they get deservedly splattered (with a little too much CGI assistance).

The peppery relationship between Mary Death (Christian Pitre) and Drifter (Matthew Marsden) – which is based on stab wounds as much as affection – is too meagre to hold the attention, and co-writer/director Henry Saine (*The Last Lovecraft*) has to shore up his lead characters with too many narrated how-we-got-here flashbacks. However, there are decent supporting turns, especially from ex-Terminator Kristanna Loken as the arch-suit, and one genuine moment of invention as the villain rants in a soundproof cubicle while battle rages in the office behind her. **S**

Credits and Synopsis

Produced by
Jason Netter
Colin Ebeling
Henry Saine
Screenplay
Jason Dodson
Henry Saine
Colin Ebeling
Story
Jason Dodson
Based on the
Kickstart Comics
graphic novel by
Jason Dodson
and illustrated
by Henry Saine
**Director of
Photography**
David Conley
Edited by
Martin Bernfeld
**Production
Designer**
Michael Gallenberg
Music
Greg Edmonson
Sound Design
Walter New
Costume Designer
Dan Selon
Stunt Co-ordinator
Randall Archer

CAST
Matthew Marsden
Drifter
Kristanna Loken
Catherine
Christian Pitre
Mary Death
Barak Hardley
Jack Lemans
Abraham Benrubi
Jimbo
Eve Jeffers
Mocha Sujata
Beverly D'Angelo

America, the future. After corporate wars have led to the collapse of society, Mary Death tracks down white-collar criminals. The Council, a replacement government, has put a bounty on Drifter, Mary's mentor and sometime lover, but she can't go through with killing him. The Council members are murdered by Catherine, CEO of Second Sun Industries, who also kidnaps Drifter, once her husband and partner. Mary slays rival Mocha Sujata and leads her feral tribe in a rescue mission to free Drifter and devastate Second Sun's HQ. Catherine wounds Mary but is killed by Drifter. After reconciling with Drifter, Mary non-fatally stabs him and heads out to hunt more corporate wrongdoers.

Cuban Fury

United Kingdom/Luxembourg 2013
Director: James Griffiths
Certificate 15 97m 46s

See interview
on page 19

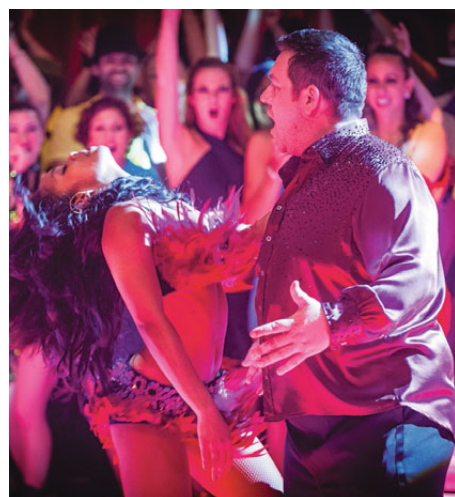
Reviewed by Dylan Cave

Despite its images of destruction and chaos, perhaps the bleakest aspect of last summer's apocalyptic comedy *The World's End* was the unhappy realisation that stars Simon Pegg and Nick Frost, comic champs of the slacker generation, are now in their forties. The disjuncture between the grim present – their characters saddled with ex-wives, mortgages, kids and other baggage – and exciting adolescent past was palpable. *Cuban Fury*, a solo outing for Nick Frost, covers similar thematic territory, offering another comic tale of thwarted teenage ambition and subsequent male arrested development.

Frost plays bored bachelor Bruce Garrett, a former teenage salsa sensation who gave up dancing following a humiliating attack by school bullies. Laidback but easily intimidated, he rediscovers his feet of flames when love interest Julia (a game Rashida Jones) reveals that she loves to salsa. So runs this amiable male-driven romcom, which has just enough wit, pace and glamour to shimmy around any sense of narrative familiarity.

The film is based on an original idea by Frost, who apparently underwent several months of salsa training. Sadly, not enough of the training makes it on to the screen, with many routines edited a little too swiftly to register the performers doing their thing. In fact, for a film passionate about salsa, the dance sequences are fairly minimal and take their time to arrive. *Cuban Fury* is comedy first and foremost.

The emphasis on the comic suits Frost, who delivers a neat pratfall and makes loser Bruce – a shy but essentially well-rounded character – funnier than expected. The film's co-stars have fun playing up screenwriter Jon Brown's banter, creating a steady flow of silly situations to propel Bruce towards the Latin limelight. Ian McShane seems to relish the part of Bruce's snarling former



Latin and geek: Nick Frost

dance teacher Ron Parfitt, who lectures his one-time protégé on dancing with heart (*"el corazón"*) and replies to Bruce's foolish questions with perverse single-fingered salutes. Kayvan Novak as Bruce's salsa classmate Bejan unashamedly hogs the best lines, while the rest of the cast make the most of their sometimes one-dimensional roles. Director James Griffiths doesn't seem too bothered about uneven characterisation, however, concentrating instead on the lively set pieces.

The best of these – Bruce's daft salsa dance-off against rival Drew in an office car park – is the moment when Frost's dance training finally blossoms on screen, and also where the heart of the film lies, as the passionate dancing overcomes the conformity of a mundane business environment. It upstages the film's finale, which is too coy to allow the romantic couple a final kiss on the dance floor. This odd reticence perhaps unwittingly summarises the failings of an amiable but underwhelming comedy. *Cuban Fury* has plenty of *el corazón* but lacks fire in its heels. **S**

Credits and Synopsis

Produced by
Nira Park
James Biddle
Written by
Jon Brown
Based on an original
idea by Nick Frost
**Director of
Photography**
Dick Pope
Editors
Jonathan Amos
Chris Dickens
Production Designer
Dick Lunn
Music
Daniel Pemberton
**Production
Sound Mixer**
Jim Greenhorn
Costume Designer
Rosa Dias
Choreographer
Richard Marcel

CAST
Nick Frost
Bruce Garrett

StudioCanal, BFI
and Film4 present
in association
with Anton Capital
Entertainment,
S.C.A. a Big Talk
Pictures production
A Big Talk Pictures
production for
StudioCanal,
BFI and Film4
Made with the
support of the
BFI's Film Fund
Developed with the
assistance of Film4
and StudioCanal
Executive Producers
Olivier Courson
Jenny Borgars
Danny Perkins
Tessa Ross
Matthew Justice
Nick Frost
Rachael Prior
Film Extracts
Salsa (1988)

Rashida Jones
Julia
Chris O'Dowd
Drew
Olivia Colman
Sam
Kayvan Novak
Bejan
Rory Kinnear
Gary
Tim Plester
Mickey
Alexandra Roach
Helen
Ian McShane
Ron Parfitt
Ben Radcliffe
young Bruce
Isabella Steinbarth
young Sam

Dolby Digital
In Colour
[2.35:1]

Distributor
StudioCanal Limited

8,799 ft +0 frames

England, present day. Bruce Garrett is a shy bachelor, leading a respectable but routine life. He has a glamorous past as a talented teenage salsa dancer but hides it from friends and colleagues and is still troubled by the violent and humiliating attack that made him stop dancing.

Bruce is attracted to Julia, a new manager at work. Learning that she likes to salsa, Bruce begins dancing again. He tracks down Ron Parfitt, the surly dance teacher he offended years earlier when he gave up dancing. Ron initially refuses to teach Bruce but changes his mind when he sees that his former protégé still has talent.

Bruce's confidence grows but he mistakenly assumes that Julia is attracted to Drew, a vulgar and bullying colleague at work. Drew repeatedly ruins Bruce's attempts to develop a relationship with Julia, and steals a mixtape that Bruce has made for her, presenting it as a gift he made himself.

Bruce discovers Drew's duplicity and confronts him. He enters a salsa competition and asks Julia to attend. After she is improperly propositioned by Drew, Julia realises that the mixtape was really from Bruce. She arrives at the salsa competition in time to find him preparing for the final. She agrees to be his salsa partner and they dance the showdown together.

Devil's Due

USA 2014

Directors: Matt Bettinelli-Olpin, Tyler Gillett

Certificate 15 88m 54s

Reviewed by Anton Bittel

The filmmaking collective Radio Silence, comprising Tyler Gillett, Justin Martinez and internet pranksters Matt Bettinelli-Olpin and Chad Villella, first courted attention in the 'found footage' anthology *VH/S* (2012) – and if their climactic contribution, entitled '10/31/98', was a calling card for their way with in-house devilry, then their not entirely dissimilar feature debut also feels more like an infant advertisement for their potential than a mature work able to stand on its own two feet.

Devil's Due updates the child-bearing anxieties of Roman Polanski's *Rosemary's Baby* (1968) to the age of home video, with newlywed Zach McCall (Zach Gilford) recording for posterity every stage in the unplanned pregnancy of his wife Samantha (Allison Miller), even as he becomes convinced that she is nurturing an embryonic Satan. It is, however, a premise that comes with twin problems. The first is that there have already been entire found-footage franchises devoted to diabolical possession (see the *Paranormal Activity*, *[REC]* and *The Last Exorcism* series), as well as found-footage films concerned specifically with demonic pregnancies (see the original 2010 *The Last Exorcism* and the 'Safe Haven' episode of 2013's *VH/S/2*). If, as the opening quote (from 1 John 2.18) of *Devil's Due* suggests, there are "many Antichrists", then films about them have proved just as legion, leaving the McCalls' otherwise spacious suburban home with little room for originality. Directors Bettinelli-Olpin and Gillett may know how to deliver thrilling scenes but they are hardly renovating this old dark house. Even the telekinetic forces applied to some characters and, latterly, to a camera, are lifted straight from 2012's *Chronicle* – with which *Devil's Due* shares producer John Davis.

The second problem is that there is no ambiguity here to generate tension. Where Polanski took great pains to leave his viewers uncertain from start to finish whether they were witnessing a gravid woman's mental unravelling or a genuine demonic conspiracy,



Raising hell: Allison Miller

Devil's Due announces its intent in its punning title (nominal phrase doubling as plot synopsis) and in its opening apocalyptic quote from the New Testament. This intent is confirmed by everything we subsequently see (even if much of it goes unnoticed by Zach himself): the impressionistically glimpsed involvement of a drugged Zach and Sam in a satanic ritual; the unnatural movements of Sam's belly; Sam's erratic, eventually paranormal (even murderous) behaviour; the activities of a watchful cult, who secretly install cameras in the McCalls' home; and finally the full-on eruption of diabolism.

The fly-on-the-wall found-footage format conventionally lends 'objectivity' to the film's supernatural events – though in this case, strictly speaking, the footage remains unfound, with all the home-video material and even a sonogram of the foetus mysteriously disappearing before they can furnish corroborative police evidence for Zach's implausible story. By implication, the sinister cabal overseeing the Antichrist's birth has removed and collated Zach's videos, to cover its tracks and to have a family record to which the child can refer in later life (ie the express original purpose of Zach's recordings). The film the cabal has appropriated and edited is also, precisely, the film that Radio Silence has put together. Or as Zach puts it in a moment of sublimely metacinematic self-awareness: "This is going to sound crazy – there's some people watching us." Ⓢ

Fonzy

France 2013

Director: Isabelle Doval

Certificate 15 102m 24s

Reviewed by Mar Diestro-Dópido

In cinema, fatherhood has regularly been depicted as simultaneously rewarding and frightening (*Three Men and a Baby* the most obvious example). If you multiply that by 533, then you have the charming, very likeable Paris-set comedy *Fonzy*, co-scripted by director Isabelle Doval with her husband José García, who also plays the eponymous protagonist. 'Fonzy' was the pseudonym adopted by Diego Costa, a warm-hearted, still-adolescent fortysomething, to donate sperm more than 600 times when he was in his twenties. Diego has not only just found out that he's being legally pursued by hundreds of twentysomething biological offspring (not to mention the French media) but also that he's about to have a child with his policewoman girlfriend Elsa, who is far from convinced that he's responsible enough for fatherhood. Unless he can prove otherwise, she'll go it alone. Naturally, when Diego acquires information on the whereabouts of some of his kids and sets out to meet them, the experience will awaken his deepest parental instincts.

Admittedly *Fonzy* doesn't sound too promising or original on paper – the opening scenes sketching a middle-aged slacker who can't take proper care of himself, fails his family and friends, grows pot in his flat and owes money to the local mafia is all too familiar. And if the storyline itself sets bells ringing, that'll be because there are a total of three versions of the same film. This one is a French, quasi-verbatim remake of Ken Scott's 2011 Canada-set *Starbuck*, simply altering the protagonist's Polish roots to Spanish; the most recent version, *Delivery Man*, was also directed by Scott. There is clearly a safety-net provided by investing in an enterprise that has already been a commercial and awards success, but despite the overfamiliarity there's still something new to enjoy in *Fonzy*. In particular García's finely tuned, offbeat portrayal of Diego gives both character and film a down-to-earth quality and an acute sense of authenticity – he seems to be genuinely confused and tormented, yet somehow relishing the situation too. And although his story is generally framed within a series of stereotypes around gender, fatherhood and growing up, *Fonzy* still manages to veer away from teary

Credits and Synopsis

Produced by

John Davis

Written by

Lindsay Devlin

Director of

Photography

Justin Martinez

Edited by

Rod Dean

Production Design

Anthony Medina

Production

Sound Mixer

Michael B. Koff

Costume Designer

Ann Walters

Visual Effects

Post Mango

©Twentieth

Century Fox Film

Corporation and

TSG Entertainment

Finance LLC (in

Brazil, Italy, Japan,

Korea and Spain)

Production

Companies

A Twentieth Century

Fox presentation

A Davis Entertainment

Company production

Made in association

with TSG

Entertainment

Limited Liability

Company, Twentieth

Century Fox Film

Corporation and

TSG Entertainment

Finance LLC (in

Brazil, Italy, Japan,

Korea and Spain)

Production

Companies

A Twentieth Century

Fox presentation

A Davis Entertainment

Company production

Made in association

with TSG

Entertainment

Limited Liability

Company, Twentieth

Century Fox Film

Executive Producers

Chad Villella

Justin Martinez

James Dodson

Brittany Morrissey

CAST

Allison Miller

Samantha

McCall, 'Sam'

Zach Gilford

Zach McCall

Sam Anderson

Father Thomas

Roger Payano

cab driver

Vanessa Ray

Suzie

Bill Martin Williams

Ken

Geraldine Singer

Sally

Julia Denton

Natalie

DeMaris Gordon

psychic

Dolby Digital/

Datasat

Colour by

Fotokem

Prints by

DeLuxe

[1.85:1]

Distributor

20th Century Fox

International (UK)

8,001 ft +0 frames



Father of the pride: Solal Forte, José García

New Orleans, 2013. Zach McCall is interviewed by police.

Ten months earlier. After the last drunken night of a Dominican Republic honeymoon ends in a forgotten satanic ritual, Zach's wife Sam discovers that she is pregnant (despite being on the pill). She becomes withdrawn and aggressive, and though vegetarian, secretly devours raw meat. Strangers observe the McCall house from outside and install clandestine video cameras. At the christening of Sam and Zach's niece, Father Thomas has a stroke. Watching footage

of the christening, Zach notices their Dominican cab driver in the congregation and sees for the first time the missing episode from their holiday video. Father Thomas warns of the coming Antichrist. Possessed, Sam hunts deer and telekinetically kills three onlookers. As Zach finds the neighbouring hideout of a satanic cabal, Sam kills Zach's sister. Pinned supernaturally to a wall, Zach watches the entranced Sam slice open her own belly and then die. Conspirators take the baby. In Paris, the cabbie approaches a honeymooning couple.

◀ sentimentality most of the time, in favour of genuine fondness for its characters.

The tricky issues surrounding the anonymity of sperm donors are of course dealt with very lightly, mostly in the service of comic salvos in the 'stallion' mould. Nevertheless, Doval's female perspective offers some sort of counterweight to more straightforward portrayals of the immature bum, and the settings too steer clear of picture-postcard Paris; all of which seems fitting for what is, in the final analysis, a moral tale about the pursuit of selflessness. Ⓢ

Credits and Synopsis

Produced by
Alain Pancrazi
Odile McDonald
**Adaptation/
Dialogue**
Karine de Dermo,
José Garcia,
Isabelle Doval
Based on the film
Starbuck written
by Ken Scott and
Martin Petit, directed
by Ken Scott
**Director of
Photography**
Gilles Henri
Editor
Guéric Catala
Art Direction
Bertrand Seitz
Music
André Manoukian
We Were Evergreen
Sound
Laurent Cercloux
Alexis Place
Eric Tisserand
Costume Designer
Charlotte David

©Made in PM,
Studiocanal,
Tf1 Films
Production, Jouror
Développement 2013
**Production
Companies**
Made in PM and
Studiocanal present
a Made in PM,
Studiocanal and Tf1
Films Production

co-production
with the
participation of Tf1,
Canal + and Cine +
Executive Producer
Bernard Boux

CAST

José Garcia
Diego Costa
Audrey Fleurot
Elsa
**Lucien Jean-
Baptiste**
Quentin
Gérard Hernandez
Ramon
Laurent Mouton
Enrique
Vérino
Manuel
Arnaud Tsamere
Maître Chasseigne,
lawyer
Alice Belaidi
Sybille
Solal Forte
Fugu/Xavier
François Civil
Hugo
Douglas Attal
spokesman
Hugo Dessioux
Marcus
Alison Wheeler
traffic warden
François Debloek
Nathan
Gary Mihailenau
Diego aged 20
Marvin Martin

himself

**Dolby Digital
In Colour**
[2.35:1]
Subtitles

Distributor
Studiocanal Limited

9,216 ft +0 frames

47 Ronin

USA/Japan 2013
Director: Carl Rinsch
Certificate 12A 118m 37s



Firefighter: 47 Ronin

Reviewed by Nick Pinkerton

The story of the 47 ronin has been retold so many times in Japanese culture that works based on it are a subgenre unto themselves – the ChDshingura. The most famous of the screen ChDshingura, Mizoguchi Kenji's 1941 film, is considered a classic. Before talking about the new \$170m American/Japanese co-production (with international cast and crew) of *47 Ronin* – shot in the UK, Hungary and Japan and shown in 3D – let's agree to take the issue of cultural appropriation off the table. Kurosawa, after all, used Dostoevsky, Hammett and Shakespeare as sources, though transposing them to a Japanese context. So why shouldn't Hollywood adapt one of the most famous tales in Japanese history, that of a band of samurai who swear to avenge their fallen lord and master even though their loyalty will cost them their lives?

Carl Rinsch's *47 Ronin* is a sad trombone sound as answer to that question. While Mizoguchi's film was intended as a patriotic, nationalistic epic by its financiers, this crack at ChDshingura is pitched at a foreign audience. Approaching Japan from the outside, it is performed in halting English and stars mixed-race Eurasian actor Keanu Reeves as the comfortably familiar identification character, the orphaned half-breed who's a stranger here himself. Rinsch, a commercials/music video jobber who's been kicking around for ages, engineers exactly one so-so set piece, in which Keanu and co-star Sanada Hiroyuki arrange a tactical assault on their rival's compound. Under Rinsch's impersonal direction, these ronin achieve neither the stature of myth nor of men, but appear as just what they are: indifferently directed players slogging about in a mire of ill-spent money. Ⓢ

Credits and Synopsis

Produced by
Pamela Abdy
Eric McLeod
Screenplay
Chris Morgan
Hossein Amini
Screen Story
Chris Morgan
Walter Hamada
**Director of
Photography**
John Mathieson
Edited by
Stuart Baird
Production Designer
Jan Roelfs
Music

Ilan Eshkeri
**Production
Sound Mixer**
John Midgley
Costume Designer
Penny Rose
Visual Effects
MPC
Digital Domain
Baseblack
Milk Visual Effects
Halon Entertainment
LLC
SOHO VFX
Stunt Co-ordinator
Gary Powell
Fight

Choreographers
Nikki Berwick
Stephen Oyoung
Peng Zhang
©Universal Studios
**Production
Companies**
Universal Pictures
presents a H2F
Entertainment
and Mid Atlantic
Films production
Presented in
association with
Dentsu Inc./
Fuji Television

Network, Inc.
Executive Producers
Scott Stuber
Chris Fenton
Walter Hamada

Cast

Keanu Reeves
Kai
Sanada Hiroyuki
Kuranosuke Oishi
Shibasaki Ko
Mika
Asano Tadanobu
Lord Kira
Tanaka Min

Lord Asano
Kinkuchi Rinko
with
Akanishi Jin
Chikara Oishi
**Tagawa Cary-
Hiroyuki**
Shogun Tokugawa
Tsunayoshi
Neil Fingleton
Lovecraftian
Samurai/ogre
Igawa Togo
Tengu Lord

**Dolby Digital/
Datsat/SDDS**

Color by
DeLuxe
[2.35:1]

**Some screenings
presented in 3D**

Distributor
Universal Pictures
International
UK & Eire

10,675 ft +8 frames

Paris, the present. Diego Costa, the fortysomething son of Spanish immigrants, works as a deliveryman for the family fish business. He owes €50,000 to the local Mafia and grows marijuana in his flat.

In his twenties Diego used the pseudonym 'Fonzy' to make more than 600 donations to a sperm bank. Now he finds out that he's the biological father of 533 children, more than a hundred of whom have launched legal actions to discover his real name. His policewoman girlfriend Elsa tells him that she's pregnant but that he is not responsible enough to be a father, so she'd rather have the baby on her own. A barrister friend offers to represent Fonzy in a suit against the clinic for releasing information about his sperm donations. Diego meets some of his children anonymously. One of them suspects his identity. The others organise a get-together in a park, and Diego joins them. It transpires that Diego made the donations to raise money for a trip to Venice that his parents were unable to take prior to his mother's death. Diego wins his case and receives a large sum in compensation; however, he decides to reveal his identity when he hears his offspring plead on TV. When Elsa gives birth to their son, Diego tells her that he is Fonzy. Through the hospital window, they see his offspring waiting outside the hospital. Downstairs, Diego is joined by his brothers, his father and his extended new family.

Feudal Japan, the 18th century. Kai, a half-western orphan, is raised by Lord Asano. As he grows to manhood, lowborn Kai is shunned by Asano's retinue of samurai, led by Oishi. Kai falls in love with Asano's daughter Mika, but their forbidden affair is interrupted by the arrival of rival Lord Kira. Using sorcery, Kira tricks Asano into dishonouring

himself; as a result, the shogun orders Asano to commit seppuku. A year later, Oishi reunites the disbanded ronin, including Kai, and they set out to avenge themselves on Kira. Oishi, Kai and the loyal remnants of Asano's men commit mass seppuku after killing Kira, leaving Mika to dream of being reunited with her lover in the hereafter.

The Grand Budapest Hotel

USA/Germany 2014
Director: Wes Anderson

See feature
on page 30

Reviewed by Philip Kemp

"His world had vanished long before he entered it," the aged owner of the Grand Budapest Hotel, Mr Moustafa (F. Murray Abraham), tells the Author (Jude Law), "but he certainly sustained the illusion with a marvellous grace." He's recalling his predecessor and mentor, legendary hotel concierge M. Gustave (Ralph Fiennes), who in the pre-war period ran the hotel with impeccable control, style and suavity. But much the same could be said of Wes Anderson, who, inspired by the illustrative work of his co-screenwriter Hugo Guinness and the writings of Stefan Zweig, has created an intricate fairytale vision of the world of Middle Europe as it probably never was but perhaps should have been before at least one and possibly both world wars. Anderson has always striven to devise alternative universes of his own; *The Grand Budapest Hotel* is his most complete fabrication yet, a fanatically and fantastically detailed, sugar-iced, calorie-stuffed, gleefully overripe Sachertorte of a film. According to taste, it will likely either enchant or cloy; but for those prepared to surrender to its charms, the riches on offer – both visual and narrative – are considerable.

Shooting in three different ratios – 2.35:1, 1.85:1 and the classic 1.33:1 – to differentiate the film's three main timelines, Anderson deploys a cast that even by his standards is bewilderingly star-studded. Along with a roster of Anderson veterans – Edward Norton, Jason Schwartzman, Adrien Brody, Owen Wilson, Willem Dafoe and, inevitably, Bill Murray – *Grand Budapest* indulges itself in the luxury of casting such luminaries as Tilda Swinton, Harvey Keitel, F. Murray Abraham, Jeff Goldblum, Léa Seydoux, Tom Wilkinson, Jude Law and Mathieu Amalric in relatively minor roles.

But it's Fiennes who coolly walks off with the film. Switching seamlessly between courtliness and profanity (having seen off the elderly Madame D with old-world charm, he remarks to his startled protégé, the young Moustafa, "She was shaking like a shitting dog"), he displays a gift for comic timing that's rarely been unleashed since his Essex gang boss in 2007's *In Bruges*. He plays Gustave as polymathic, omniscient and casually bisexual, besides being plugged into a network of fellow concierges, the Society of the Crossed Keys, whose help he can call upon in time of crisis. The role was originally planned for Johnny Depp; no disrespect to Depp, but it's hard to believe he could have filled it quite so consummately.

The film abounds in the gliding lateral tracking shots that Anderson loves, as well as in expensive luggage (see *The Darjeeling Limited*, passim) and covert jokes. Much of the plot revolves around a valuable painting, 'Boy with Apple', which Madame D (Swinton) has left to Gustave, to the fury of her brutal son Dmitri (Brody). When Gustave makes off with the work in question, a piece of glossy pseudo-Renaissance kitsch by the fictitious Jan van Hoyt, he fills the gap on the wall with an exquisite double nude by Egon Schiele. Noticing the substitution, Dmitri smashes the Schiele in rage. Comic words of nonsense German are tossed into the mix. "*Ich*



The Hungary games: Ralph Fiennes

war gespannt wie ein Fritzlburger," the Author (Wilkinson) tells us in voiceover: *gespannt* means excited, *Fritzlburger* doesn't exist. History is blithely played with: the war that engulfs the characters breaks out in 1932 – "a combination", Anderson explains, "of the 1914 and 1939 wars".

In keeping with the film's ludic mode, Anderson indulges in mini-pastiches of other cinematic genres. The pursuit and murder of lawyer Kovacs (Goldblum) by Dmitri's hired thug (Dafoe) in the darkened galleries of an art museum channels *film noir*, while Gustave's

escape from jail with a group of fellow cons parodies every jailbreak movie by following them through a hole dug in the cell floor, a dumb waiter, the prison kitchens, the guards' bunkroom (tiptoeing delicately over the sleeping custodians), a steam vent, the laundry and a sewer. There's skilled pastiche, too, in Alexandre Desplat's score, with its perky zithers and doom-laden organ chorales. Yet beneath all the jokiness there's a sense of loss, a nostalgia for an age that neither the filmmakers nor all but a few of their audience can ever have known. ☺

Credits and Synopsis

Produced by
Wes Anderson
Scott Rudin
Steven Rales
Jeremy Dawson
Screenplay
Wes Anderson
Story
Wes Anderson
Hugo Guinness
Inspired by
the writings of
Stefan Zweig
**Director of
Photography**
Robert Yeoman
Editor
Barney Pilling

Production Designer
Adam Stockhausen
Original Music
Alexandre Desplat
Sound Mixer
Pawel Wdowczak
Costume Designer
Milena Canonero

@TGBH LLC,
Twentieth Century Fox
Film Corporation and
TSG Entertainment
Finance LLC.
**Production
Companies**
Fox Searchlight
Pictures in
association with
Indian Paintbrush
and Studio
Babelsberg present
An American
Empirical Picture
Made in association
with TSG
Entertainment
With the support
of DFFF - Deutsche
Filmförderfonds,
MDM - Mitteldeutsche
Medienförderung,
MFG Filmförderung,
Medienboard
Berlin-Brandenburg

Executive Producers
Molly Cooper
Charlie Woeckchen
Christoph Fisser
Henning Molfenter

CAST

Ralph Fiennes
M. Gustave
F. Murray Abraham
Mr Moustafa
Mathieu Amalric
Serge X.
Adrien Brody
Dmitri
Willem Dafoe
Jopling

Jeff Goldblum
Deputy Kovacs
Harvey Keitel
Ludwig
Jude Law
young writer
Bill Murray
M. Ivan
Edward Norton
Inspector Henckels
Saoirse Ronan
Agatha
Jason Schwartzman
M. Jean
Tilda Swinton
Madame D.
Tom Wilkinson
author

Owen Wilson
M. Chuck
Tony Revolori
Zero Moustafa

**Dolby Digital/
Datasat/SDDS
In Colour**
[2.35:1], [1.85:1]
and [1.33:1]

Distributor
20th Century Fox
International (UK)

The former republic of Zubrovka, Eastern Europe, post-1985. A young woman contemplates the statue of the country's greatest author.

In 1985, the Author tells us how, in 1968, he visited the Grand Budapest Hotel, high in the mountains, now fallen on hard times. There he meets the owner, Mr Moustafa, who tells him how he came to the hotel in 1932, during its glory years under its greatest concierge, M. Gustave.

Gustave, who romances the elderly ladies who stay at the hotel, takes affectionate leave of the aged Madame D. Meanwhile Zero Moustafa, a refugee, starts work as a lobby boy under Gustave's tutelage and is attracted to Agatha, a young woman who works at Mendl's patisserie. News comes of Madame D's death; despite war scares, Gustave travels to her home at Schloss Lutz, taking Zero with him. En route, they're harassed by soldiers but rescued by Inspector Henckels, who stayed at the Budapest as a boy.

At Lutz, Deputy Kovacs reads Madame D's will: she has left Gustave her most valuable painting, van Hoyt's 'Boy with Apple'. Her son Dmitri furiously contests the will. With the connivance of butler Serge, Gustave takes the painting, stashing it in the hotel safe. Dmitri demands that Kovacs annul the bequest; Kovacs refuses, and is murdered by Dmitri's henchman Jopling. Gustave is arrested for Madame D's murder and jailed. With the help of his fellow convicts he escapes, making his way to the remote monastery where Serge is hiding; Serge confesses that he betrayed Gustave and is killed by Jopling. Gustave and Zero pursue Jopling, and Zero pushes him over a cliff. War breaks out. Agatha, retrieving the painting, is pursued by Dmitri as Gustave and Zero arrive. After a shootout, Madame D's second will is found, leaving everything to Gustave.

Moustafa tells the Author that Gustave was shot and Agatha died young. He keeps the hotel on in her memory.

Grudge Match

USA 2013
Director: Peter Segal
Certificate 12A 113m 5s

Reviewed by Vadim Rizov

According to real-life sports announcer Jim Lampley, who's tasked with *Grudge Match*'s opening montage exposition, boxers Billy 'The Kid' McDonnen (Robert De Niro) and Henry 'Razor' Sharp (Sylvester Stallone) were 80s rivals on the scale of Larry Bird and Magic Johnson. The more obvious spectres hovering over *Grudge Match* are unnamed but broadly winked at: *Raging Bull*'s Jake LaMotta (referenced in Kid's sad attempts at self-valorising stand-up) and Rocky Balboa.

The 'Grumpy Old Boxers' premise of two elderly ex-competitors agreeing to a third, tie-breaking match seems to promise equally shared time between the co-stars, but *Grudge Match* is – a minor mercy – more of a Stallone drama than a De Niro comedy. In homage to his reputation-making Philly survivor, Stallone swallows four eggs in real time (the kind of special effect requiring more than mere money to execute) and automatically raises his fist to punch a hanging slab of beef in a meat locker. The out-of-character references also encompass 1993's *Demolition Man* ("When did they unfreeze you?") and, for cameo-ing LL Cool J, one line as a reminder of his musical glory days ("I'm gonna knock you out"). Stallone's wounded working-class stiff is here transplanted to Pittsburgh, 300 miles from Rocky's Philadelphia. Razor's meek composure in decrepit industrial surroundings is the updated Rocky to Stallone's still Rambo-esque decimation of entire villages in the *Expendables* franchise, indicating the actor's continuing flexibility in catering to fans of two irreconcilable poses.

Stallone's big punchlines fall flat (in jail with De Niro, to other inmates: "Would one of you guys rape him already?"). In a rare personalising touch, the melted-down steel sculptures with which Razor litters his house appear to be samples of Stallone's own work, which he recently described as attempts at "reinterpreting certain industry icons". As Razor plaintively says, "I got a creative side. You didn't know that, did you?"

De Niro's ongoing attempts at comedy, meanwhile, seem born from a sincere, deeply misguided belief that people enjoy watching him mug, as opposed to having been temporarily drawn to the long-gone novelty of his casting in



Ageing bulls: Stallone, Hart, De Niro

Analyze This (1999) and *Meet the Parents* (2000). A typically painful improvised scene is a very poor stab at Danny Kaye panic-attack territory, with De Niro interminably repeating "No fight, no money, no tickets" in various combinations.

For supplemental comic relief, Alan Arkin yells that he's elderly ("I'm an old guy! I gotta be watching *Dancing with the Stars*! I'm serious!") and Kevin Hart emphasises that he can't understand Caucasian ways ("I can't, I can't — this is white-people shit!"); both jokes are diligently repeated for emphasis. Relentless product placement ranges from innocuously predictable (Budweiser at a bar) to shameless (De Niro and Stallone parachuting on to the bullseye logo of the Target supermarket chain) to relatively novel in the courting of a geriatric demographic (the duo's parachutes opening to display the name of joint pain rub Bengay).

Veteran hack Peter Segal (*Anger Management*, *Tommy Boy*) leaves a lot of dead air to allow for the laughs that, in all but the least demanding theatres, will never arise. Stallone emerges with his persona coherently reasserted ("I'm a fighter, I was born to be a fighter"), thankfully eschewing new attempts at broad comedy. Segal and DP Dean Semler let scenes roll on endlessly, as two people untrained in improv do their meagre best to keep the mutual abuse going. The occasional smeary blur, characteristic of current digital cameras whip-panning faster than advisable, produces the discomfiting sensation that De Niro is winding up his career pulling sub-children's-movie faces in straight-to-video fodder. **S**

Credits and Synopsis

Produced by Bill Gerber Mark Steven Johnson Michael Ewing Peter Segal Ravi Mehta	Edited by William Kerr Production Designer Wynn Thomas Music Trevor Rabin Production Sound Mixer Paul Ledford Costumes Designed by Mary Vogt	©Warner Bros. Entertainment Inc. Production Companies Warner Bros. Pictures presents a Bill Gerber production A Callahan Filmworks production A Peter Segal film Executive Producers Jane Rosenthal Kevin King-Templeton
Screenplay Tim Kelleher Rodney Rothman Story Tim Kelleher Director of Photography		

Pittsburgh, the present. Retired boxers Billy 'The Kid' McDonnen and Henry 'Razor' Sharp are the subjects of a TV special documenting their rivalry during the 1980s, when Kid beat Razor before losing in a rematch. Razor dropped out before a third match could be held, in revenge for Kid stealing his girlfriend Sally Rose.

CAST Robert De Niro Billy 'The Kid' McDonnen Sylvester Stallone Henry 'Razor' Sharp Kevin Hart Dante Slat Jr Alan Arkin Louis 'Lightning' Conlon Kim Basinger	Sally Rose Jon Bernthal BJ Camden Gray Trey LL Cool J Frankie Brite Dolby Digital/ Datasat Colour by DeLuxe Prints by	Technicolor [1.85:1] Distributor Warner Bros Distributors (UK) 10,177 ft +8 frames
--	---	--

After being approached by Dante, the son of his former promoter, the cash-strapped Razor reluctantly agrees to participate in a rematch with Kid. Their frequent bickering while promoting the event gains them internet attention. Kid bonds with his son and grandson; Razor is reunited with Sally Rose. In the rematch, Razor beats Kid.

The Harry Hill Movie

United Kingdom 2013
Director: Steve Bendelack
Certificate PG 87m 48s

Reviewed by Ashley Clark

A cursory glance at the synopsis tells you that the plot of *The Harry Hill Movie* – the surrealist TV comedian and former stand-up's first cinematic venture – is a nonsense; or rather, it's an extremely loose framework on which to hang a string of bizarre digressions and sight gags that intermittently hit the mark. The first big laugh arrives when a title card improbably announces the following events to be "based on a true story". Further highlights include a garden-set standoff between Hill and a battalion of armed chickens, while an admirably straight-faced cameo from Jim Broadbent as a mutant female security guard at a nuclear power plant defeats stiff competition to qualify as the film's weirdest moment.

Yet *The Harry Hill Movie* bears detectable traces of darkness, placing it in line with a quintessentially British strain of comedy, from TV's *Rising Damp* (1974-78) to *Sightseers* (2012). For all its bright primary colours, musical interludes and anthropomorphised furry animals, this is really a story about unhappy families (Hill's Nan is a secret petrol drinker), shabby locales and curtain-twitching suburban malaise, while our supposed hero is motivated entirely by self-interest. It's this frisson of subversiveness that lifts an ostensibly family-friendly gadabout beyond average and into the realm of genuine curiosity. **S**

Credits and Synopsis

Produced by Robert Jones Screenplay Harry Hill Jon Foster James Lamont Story Harry Hill Director of Photography Baz Irvine Editor Michael Parker Production Design Grenville Horner Fleur Whitlock Composer Steve Brown Sound Recordist Martin Beresford Costume Designer Leah Archer	Entertainment Film Distributors presents a Lucky Features production in association with Jonescompany Productions Executive Producers Nigel Green Trevor Green Matthew Hall [i.e. Harry Hill] CAST Harry Hill Harry Julie Walters Nan Matt Lucas Otto Simon Bird Vet Sheridan Smith Michelle Cull	Guillaume Delaunay Kisko Marc Wootton Barney Cull Julian Barratt Conch Richard Coombs Abu (puppeteer) Johnny Vegas Abu (voice) Jim Broadbent cleaner Dolby Digital In Colour Prints by DeLuxe [2.35:1] Distributor Entertainment Film Distributors Ltd 7,902 ft +0 frames
--	--	--

UK, the present. Eccentric middle-aged suburbanite Harry Hill lives with his Nan. Their pet hamster Abu is rushed to hospital and given only a week to live, so the three go on a trip to Blackpool. Harry's vengeful twin brother Otto dispatches henchmen Vet and Kisko to capture Abu, though their efforts continually fail. Harry is introduced to Michelle Cull – a woman made of seashells – and they begin a relationship. On the way back from Blackpool, Hill, Nan and Abu stop off at a circus, where Harry takes part in a boxing match against Kisko. While Nan is distracted by a fox disguised as Abu, the real Abu is taken. Otto prepares to 'plastinate' (a form of taxidermy) Abu in his lair, but is foiled when Michelle's family of shell people arrives to save the day. Otto tries to run away with Abu but is chased up Blackpool Tower. Harry, supported by Nan (now flying a helicopter), successfully rescues Abu. It transpires that Abu was being poisoned all along, but will survive.

I, Frankenstein

USA/Australia 2013
Director: Stuart Beattie
Certificate 12A 92m 16s

Reviewed by Kim Newman

It's no surprise that *I, Frankenstein* is based on a comic book. Its ridiculous mix-and-match of mad science and demented theology is exactly the sort of storyline that comics get around to after they've used up all the good ideas or want to justify a crossover with whatever is selling this month.

The opening evokes Mary Shelley, or at least Kenneth Branagh, with a scarred, scraggle-haired Monster carrying his dead, frozen creator from the Arctic to (presumably) Switzerland for burial. No sooner is Victor Frankenstein buried than his creation is assailed by CGI demons and gargoyles who've flitted in from the filmography of Scott Stewart (*Legion, Priest*). Writers Stuart Beattie (who also directed) and Kevin Greivoux (who also acts) subject the Monster to lengthy explanations, before the film gets down to the business of littering the screen with supernatural beings who descend in fire or ascend in light when killed.

This could have been told with any monster in the lead, since Aaron Eckhart's kung-fu creature is a bystander in someone else's battle. Considering the mythic (and physical) stature of the role, Eckhart counts as the most bathetic of Frankenstein's creatures – his big emotional moment involves burning a diary. **6**

Credits and Synopsis

Produced by
Tom Rosenberg
Gary Lucchesi
Richard Wright
Andrew Mason
Sidney Kimmel
Screenplay
Stuart Beattie
Screen Story
Kevin Greivoux
Stuart Beattie
Based on the
Darkstorm
Studios graphic
novel created by
Kevin Greivoux
**Director of
Photography**
Ross Emery
Editor
Marcus D'Arcy
**Production
Designer**
Michelle McGahey
Music by/Score
Arranged by
Johnny Klimek
Reinhold Heil
Sound Recordist
Andrew Ramage
Costume Designer
Cappi Ireland
Stunt Co-ordinator
Chris Anderson
Visual Effects
Iloura

Luma Pictures
Cutting Edge
Rising Sun
Method Studios

@Lakeshore
Entertainment
Group LLC and Lions
Gate Films Inc.
**Production
Companies**
Lionsgate, Lakeshore
Entertainment,
SKE Films present
a Hopscotch
Features, Lakeshore
Entertainment,
Lionsgate, SKE
Films production
A film by Stuart
Beattie
**Executive
Producers**
Troy Lum
Eric Reid
David Kern
James McQuaide
Bruce Toll
Jim Tauber
Matt Berenson
Kevin Greivoux

CAST

Aaron Eckhart
Adam

Bill Nighy
Prince Naberius,
'Dr Wessex'
Yvonne Strahovsky
Terra Wade
Miranda Otto
Queen Leonore
Jai Courtney
Gideon
Socratis Otto
Zuriel
Kevin Greivoux
Dekar
Caitlin Stacey
Keziah
Mahesh Jadu
Ophir
Aden Young
Victor Frankenstein

**Dolby Surround 7.1/
Datasat/SDDS
In Colour
[2.35:1]**

Some screenings
presented in 3D

Distributor
Entertainment
Film Distributors

8,304 ft +0 frames

In 1795, after burying his creator, Frankenstein's Monster is attacked by demons but rescued by gargoyles. Leonore, queen of the gargoyles, gives the monster a name, Adam. He declines to join the gargoyles, opting instead to continue demon-hunting on his own.

Two centuries later, demon prince Naberius hires human scientist Dr Terra Wade to recreate Frankenstein's experiment and animate an army of soulless corpses, which his hordes will then possess. With the gargoyles routed and Frankenstein's notebook – and the secrets of the reanimation process – falling into demon hands, Adam must fight the demons and rescue Terra to prevent the victory of hell on earth.

Jack Ryan: Shadow Recruit

USA 2013
Director: Kenneth Branagh
Certificate 12A 105m 23s

Reviewed by Henry K. Miller

The first and best Jack Ryan film, *The Hunt for Red October* (1990), had the misfortune to appear just as the Soviet empire was crumbling, leaving a series of lesser antagonists for secret agents to tangle with. Like a sleeper cell, this re-reboot was greenlit to coincide with the return of Russia as Global Bad Guy No. 1. Here the FSB's SMERSH-like scheme is to wreck the world economy by secretly buying up US treasuries and then selling them in great quantities immediately after a bomb attack on Manhattan. Jack Ryan, who has a PhD from the LSE and works undercover for the CIA on Wall Street, is the only man who is both intellectually equipped to understand the first part of the plan and physically capable of stopping the second.

For all the fancy talk of algorithms – shades of *The Departed*'s microprocessors: "I don't know what they are, you don't know what they are, who gives a fuck?" – Ryan's real mission is to beat up henchmen, break into buildings, get into car chases and defuse bombs. To be sure, he knows his way around a memory stick but in most respects the secret agent's trade has changed little since the Cold War. Ryan himself, however, as played by Chris Pine, is something new.

Like Jessica Chastain's Maya in *Zero Dark Thirty* (2012), Pine's Ryan is a Generation X spy, recruited after 9/11. Unlike Maya, he's completely, perfectly stable, even more of a blank slate than Jason Bourne. At the end of the film, as he prepares to meet the president, his CIA controller (Kevin Costner) asks whether he'll ever lose "that boy scout on a field trip look"; Pine is no younger than Alec Baldwin was at the time of *Red October*, but no matter how many men his character drowns in bathtubs, it seems unlikely. Neither Wall Street nor Langley rubs off on him: early on he mentions his qualms about torture but is easily reassured that it's someone else's department.

Credits and Synopsis

Produced by
Lorenzo di
Bonaventura
Mace Neufeld
David Barron
Mark Vahradian
Written by
Adam Cozad
David Koopp
Based on characters
created by
Tom Clancy
**Director of
Photography**
Harris Zambouloukos
Edited by
Martin Walsh
Production Designer
Andrew Laws
Music
Patrick Doyle
Sound Mixer
Peter Glossop
Costume Designer
Jill Taylor
Stunt Co-ordinator
Vic Armstrong
Visual Effects
Cinesite Limited
Baseblack

CAST
Chris Pine
John Patrick
Ryan, Jack
Kevin Costner
Commander
Thomas Harper
Kenneth Branagh
Viktor Cherevin
Keira Knightley
Cathy Muller
Colm Feore
Rob Behringer
Peter Andersson
Dimitri Lemkov

Paramount Pictures
and Skydance
Productions
present a Mace
Neufeld/Lorenzo
di Bonaventura
production
A Kenneth
Branagh film
Executive Producers
David Ellison
Dana Goldberg
Paul Schwake
Film Extracts
*Sorry, Wrong
Number* (1948)
*Rosemary's
Baby* (1968)

CAST

Chris Pine
John Patrick
Ryan, Jack
Kevin Costner
Commander
Thomas Harper
Kenneth Branagh
Viktor Cherevin
Keira Knightley
Cathy Muller
Colm Feore
Rob Behringer
Peter Andersson
Dimitri Lemkov

©Paramount Pictures
Corporation
**Production
Companies**

Nonso Anozie
Embee Deng
Gemma Chan
Amy Chang

**Dolby Digital/
Datasat
In Colour
[2.35:1]
Part-subtitled**

Distributor
Paramount
Pictures UK

9,484 ft +8 frames



One Bourne every minute: Chris Pine

Taking a casual approach to undercover work in the finance industry, he is the co-habiting, Dutch-going partner of Cathy (Keira Knightley), a doctor who, we must assume, was raised in England but is trying out an American accent to fit in.

Though he has great fun as the main villain, bonding with Cathy over Russian literature, Kenneth Branagh was not obviously cut out to direct this kind of material, and has done nothing to challenge that preconception. Partly because they have been done on the cheap, the action scenes fall far short of the standard set by the Bourne series; and given that the two car chases take place in Moscow (as in *Supremacy*) and New York (as in *Ultimatum*) the comparison is unavoidable.

While *Shadow Recruit* was in production, *Red October* director John McTiernan was embroiled in court proceedings that eventually landed him in jail, and Baldwin was committed to *30 Rock*. Both are now or soon to be free: surely it is time to give them their franchise back. **6**

Following the terrorist attacks of 9/11, economics student Jack Ryan joins the US Marines. In 2003 he is shot down over Afghanistan and narrowly avoids being paralysed. During rehabilitation he is recruited by CIA commander Thomas Harper to go undercover on Wall Street and investigate terrorist funding networks. Ten years later Ryan is still there and living with Cathy, the doctor who helped him recover.

Russia decides to punish the US for supporting a Turkish oil pipeline that will compete with Russian supplies. Ryan notices mysterious large Russian deposits in the bank he works for and decides to go to Moscow to investigate their source. He tracks the money to the Cherevin corporation, effectively an arm of the FSB secret police. He develops the theory that the Russians will coordinate a massive sell-off of US treasuries with a terrorist attack, plunging the world into depression. After an attempt on his life, Ryan manages to meet Viktor Cherevin and arranges to have dinner with him. Cathy arrives in Moscow unexpectedly, and acquiesces in Harper's plan to use her as a honey trap, distracting Cherevin while Ryan breaks into Cherevin HQ to obtain the algorithm that will be used for the sell-off. Cathy is abducted but rescued. On the plane home, the team deduce that Cherevin's son is a sleeper agent in the US. Ryan's hunch that the latter will plant a bomb on Wall Street proves correct, though tragedy is averted. His plan having failed, Cherevin is killed by his superiors.

Love Is in the Air

France 2013

Director: Alexandre Castagnetti

Reviewed by Ginette Vincendeau

Outside France, people may not yet have realised the huge number of home-grown (albeit Hollywood-inspired) romantic comedies that have been produced over the past ten years or so, since so few of them make it across the Channel. *Love Is in the Air* unambiguously comes out of this stable.

Its story – about a pair of crossed lovers who split up but three years later get back together after sitting next to one another on a flight from New York to Paris – has all the hallmarks not only of the genre, but of the French take on it: the familiar pattern of (heterosexual) falling in love, then out, then in again; the affluent milieu and glamorous – Parisian, naturally – decor and stars; the cute comic episodes; the Anglo-American music (here with the nice touch of some Duke Ellington); and the sexual politics. The genre, and this film is no exception, has many detractors in France as elsewhere, but it is as pointless to deplore the ‘formulaic’ narrative of a romcom as it would be to criticise cowboys and horses in a western. What matters is how the elements are combined and to what effect, and *Love Is in the Air* in many ways fares rather better than some, though its post-feminist stance is, alas, typically reactionary.

The actors playing the sparring couple are the film’s major asset. Ludivine Sagnier, in a beautiful blonde ‘cookie’ register, is perfect as artist Julie. Nicolas Bedos, as lawyer Antoine, the handsome cad with permanent three-day stubble, is also extremely well cast – this is not surprising, since he co-scripted the film. While *Love Is in the Air* is his first film as lead actor, Bedos is a celebrity in France both as the son of a famous comic (Guy Bedos) and in his own right as a successful playwright, television humorist and journalist. He specialises in taking provocative, politically incorrect, positions: last October, for example, he was one of a number of male celebrities to sign the manifesto of the ‘343 bastards’, a text opposed to forthcoming legislation to criminalise the clients of prostitutes. Although the manifesto created a furore, and Bedos subsequently ‘regretted’ signing it, its very existence and language speak of a culture in which everyday misogyny and laddish behaviour at the highest echelons of society are regarded with indulgence. This is relevant to the film.


Even before he meets Julie on the New York to Paris flight, and then through the flashbacks detailing their affair, Antoine is the archetypal womaniser, nicknamed ‘Mr Two Weeks’ in acknowledgement of his inability to be (even sexually) interested in a woman for more than a fortnight. Nevertheless, scores of beautiful young – even underage – women fall for him, as does eventually the romantic and seemingly independent Julie. The reason for their break-up – his deliberate sabotaging of the grant she has won to study in Japan – could initially be seen as a critique of his machismo, of his inability to take her artistic ambition seriously. But Julie is quite prepared to overlook his lukewarm interest in her art (a reaction incidentally entirely supported by the film), and the break-up in fact occurs over a farcical mix-up involving a naked woman in his bathroom. Similarly, the



Love on the fly: Ludivine Sagnier, Nicolas Bedos

two secondary characters who act as foils and confidants to the central couple – Julie’s mother Marie (the wonderful and underused Clémentine Célerié) and Antoine’s best friend Hugo (Jonathan Cohen) – only confirm the attractiveness of the sexist rake: Hugo is forever trying, and failing, to emulate Antoine’s success with women, while Marie’s wise suspicion of Antoine is brushed aside at the end by Julie in a vicious attack on her mother’s ‘sad’ single status. The message: better to live with a complete bastard than on your own.

At the end, in the tradition of the American ‘comedy of remarriage’, Julie ditches the kind and respectful but dull Franck (Arnaud Ducret) to get back to the horrid but sexy Antoine.

Love Is in the Air cannot, and to be fair does not, pretend to approach the heights of the best of its American models. Nevertheless, as fits this tradition, the film crackles along thanks to the delightful Sagnier, the snappy dialogue and some excellent character actors, in particular Célerié and Michel Vuillermoz as flight attendant Georges. The film’s conservative sexual politics, while they echo many recent examples of the genre on both sides of the Atlantic, are also – through both the character of Antoine and the persona of Bedos – all too representative of aspects of French culture. In this respect, the romcom, in France as elsewhere, is a useful social and cultural barometer. 

Credits and Synopsis

Produced by
Mathieu Robinet
Julien Ralanto
Catherine Bozorgan
David Poirot
Screenplay
Vincent Angell
**Adaptation/
Dialogue**
Nicolas Bedos
Nirina Ralanto
Brigitte Bemol
Julien Simonet
Xavier Nemo
Alexandre Castagnetti
**Director of
Photography**
Yannick Ressigeac
Editing
Scott Stevenson
Art Direction
François Emmanuelli
Original Music
Nicolas Wauquiez
Evymoon
Sound Mixer
Jean-Paul Bernard
Costumes

Emmanuelle
Youchnovski

©Révérence,
Manchester Films,
Thelma Films,
Universal Pictures
International France
**Production
Companies**
Universal Pictures
International France
presents a Révérence,
Manchester Films,
Thelma Films,
Universal Pictures
International France
production
in association with
Indéfims, Kinology
A film by Alexandre
Castagnetti

CAST

Ludivine Sagnier
Julie
Nicolas Bedos

Antoine
Jonathan Cohen
Hugo
Arnaud Ducret
Franck
Brigitte Catillon
Claire
Jackie Berroyer
Arthur
Clémentine Célerié
Marie
Michel Vuillermoz
Georges

**Dolby Digital
In Colour**
[2.35:1]
Subtitles

Distributor
Swipe Films

French theatrical title
**Amour &
turbulences**

New York, Paris and the journey between the two, the present. Julie, an artist, and Antoine, a lawyer, are two young French people living in New York who were once romantically involved and who find themselves sitting next to one another on a transatlantic plane bound for Paris. Julie is returning to France to marry her fiancé Franck; Antoine is going for a job interview. Over the course of the flight they argue, especially as Julie is still smarting from their earlier break-up. A series of flashbacks takes us through their relationship and the events that led to their separation. We learn about Julie’s initial resistance to Antoine, who is a notorious womaniser, but gradually she is conquered. Antoine falls in love with Julie and she moves in with him – to the surprise of Antoine’s friend Hugo and the disapproval of Julie’s mother Marie. Julie wins a coveted grant to study in Japan but Antoine does not want to lose her so he ruins her chances of going. She is furious when she finds out and decides to leave him – especially as a misunderstanding seems to confirm his womanising. However, after the plane lands in Paris, they meet again (the firm Antoine is applying to is in fact Franck’s) and Julie cancels her wedding to be with Antoine.

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Nymph()maniac Volume 1

Denmark/Germany/France/Belgium/Sweden/Norway 2013
Director: Lars von Trier

See feature
on page 22

Reviewed by Jonathan Romney

The “great question” that Freud claimed he could never answer was, “What does a woman want?” There’s no reason to expect that Lars von

Trier of all people should be able to answer it – especially since critics remain perplexed, film after film, by the question “What does Lars von Trier want?” It’s usually taken as read that he wants to confound critics and admirers alike, and *Nymph()maniac* offers ample evidence of this: much of the ongoing discussion between female narrator Joe and her male interlocutor Seligman concerns aspects of ‘political correctness’, for want of a better term, and one early barb about the fallacy of confusing anti-Zionism with anti-Semitism (“despite what certain political powers say”) seems directed at the Cannes film festival, which declared von Trier persona non grata in 2011 after he joked about being a Nazi.

The question of how the world perceives Lars von Trier may seem an anecdotal side issue, a matter for PR rather than one to be addressed on screen – but the director’s preoccupation with the hazards of being von Trier seems so much a part of *Nymph()maniac* that it threatens at times to overshadow the film’s ostensible subject matter. This comes across most flagrantly in *Volume 2* (reviewed next page), when von Trier reworks the already notorious ‘child death’ opening sequence of *Antichrist*, his 2009 film depicting female sexuality as an object of extreme horror. It’s as if he’s saying, “You thought it was manipulative/tasteless/kitsch the first time? Well, here’s the same again – see if you like it any better.”

Any early attempt to review *Nymph()maniac* can only be content with outlining the questions crammed into this dense, sprawling piece of metafiction, which acts in part as a self-reflexive summum of von Trier’s thematic and stylistic obsessions to date. *Nymph()maniac* could be considered a pendant to *Antichrist*, with Charlotte Gainsbourg again playing a woman pursuing her desire to the brink of madness. Or you might view it as a satanic reimagining of 1996’s *Breaking the Waves*, though here the heroine, instead of using her sexuality in the spirit of saintly self-abnegation, pursues her own desires, destroying those around her: to put it in a Sadeian perspective, you could call this film the Juliette to *Waves’* Justine.

The film is so densely steeped in literary and other cultural references (Izaak Walton, Epicurus, Mann’s *Doctor Faustus*, Bach) that it’s tempting to regard its real theme not as nymphomania but mythomania. Joe’s unreliable first-person narrative is seemingly improvised off the cuff, triggered by the cues she finds scattered around Seligman’s flat – a portrait, a fishing fly, a gun-shaped stain. There’s some cause to regard storytelling and sexual activity as parallel obsessions: in one of his notorious early manifestos, von Trier styled himself “the True Masturbator of the Silver Screen”. *Nymph()maniac* could be regarded as his most masturbatory work as much in its narrative excess as in its sexual content. Like Joe, von Trier does not know when to stop: the four-hour ‘soft’ version of the film released in the UK in two volumes (the longer



Voyage to the end of the night: Charlotte Gainsbourg

cut contains more hardcore material) feels as if it could have been boiled down from a considerably longer version involving more episodes, more characters and indeed more of the characters who only pass through. A notable case is Joe’s mother, supposedly a “cold bitch” whose near-absence is one of the most teasing gaps symbolised by the vagina-like brackets replacing the ‘o’ in the title.

A modern Scheherazade, Joe spins out her stories till daybreak, but to what purpose? To save her own life, to redeem herself through confession, or to seduce the one man who seems immune to temptation, the supposedly asexual Seligman (Stellan Skarsgård)? Von Trier has claimed that *Nymph()maniac* will institute a new strain of filmmaking, which he has named ‘Digressionism’ – hence Seligman’s interruptions of Joe’s sexual saga to draw often ludicrously dry parallels with, among other topics, botany, fly fishing and the cantus firmus in baroque music. Seligman’s role is to ‘footnote’ the narration: the insertion of non-narrative visual material, sometimes in split-screen, resembles the digressive footnotes of David Foster Wallace’s novels, or W.G.

Sebal’d’s use of illustrations (not to mention the fragmented screens of Peter Greenaway’s *The Pillow Book* and Tulsa Luper trilogy).

Seligman’s gloss also serves to de-eroticise Joe’s exploits, insistently placing them in incongruous sterile intellectual contexts. In fact, *Nymph()maniac* generally sets out to de-eroticise, in contrast to the tradition of Danish soft porn evoked by the vaguely 70s setting and retro-sensationalist title. Pornography tends to sexualise every aspect of everyday life, to make everything, however mundane – most classically, a visit from the plumber – a potential stimulus for desire. But von Trier goes out of his way to drain all potential for eroticism from a world governed by sexual activity. Thus, for example, the habitat of S&M master K resembles both a drab bureaucratic waiting room and the rehearsal space for a piece of austere experimental theatre (with K shifting furniture and props like a stage director). In fact, the theatrical feel and the long-suffering heroine make a case for regarding *Nymph()maniac* as essentially the belated third chapter of a hyper-Brechtian trilogy, following *Dogville* and *Manderlay*. 📺

Credits and Synopsis

Produced by
Louise Vesth
Written by
Lars von Trier
Director of Photography
Manuel Alberto Claro
Film Editor
Molly Malene Stensgaard
Production Designer
Simone Grau Roney
Sound Designer
Kristian Selin
Costume Designer
Manon Rasmussen

©Zentropa
Entertainments31,
Zentropa

International
Köln, Slot
Machine, Zentropa
International France,
Caviar, ZenBelgie,
ARTE France Cinéma
Production Companies
Presented by Zentropa
Entertainments31
ApS
Executive co-produced by Zentropa
International Köln
Co-produced by Slot Machine
SarL, Zentropa
International France,
Caviar, ZenBelgie
BVBA, Zentropa

International Sweden
AB, ARTE France
Cinéma, Film i Väst,
Groupe Grand Accord:
ARTE G.E.I.E.
With support from Danish Film
Institute, Film- und
Medienstiftung NRW,
Eurimages, Deutscher
Filmförderfonds,
French Centre
National du Cinéma
et de l’Image Animée,
Belgian Tax Shelter,
Swedish Film
Institute, Flanders
Audiovisual Fund
(VAF), MEDIA
programme of the
European Union

In co-operation with
DR, Nordisk Film & TV
Fond, Canal+, ARTE
France, Nordisk Film
Cinema Distribution,
Vestdanske
Filmpulje, Ciné+
Executive Producers
Peter Aalbæk Jensen
Marie Gade Denessen
Peter Garde

CAST

Charlotte Gainsbourg
Joe
Stellan Skarsgård
Seligman
Stacy Martin
young Joe

Shia LaBeouf
Jerôme
Christian Slater
Joe’s father
Uma Thurman
Mrs H
Sophie Kennedy Clark
B
Connie Nielsen
Joe’s mother
Jamie Bell
K
Willem Dafoe
L
Mia Goth
P
Michaël Pas
old Jérôme
Jean-Marc Barr
debtor gentleman

Udo Kier
waiter
Hugo Speer
Mr H

Dolby Digital
In Colour and Black and White
[2.35:1] and [1.85:1]

Distributor
Curzon Film World

A woman named Joe lies beaten in an alley. A middle-aged man, Seligman, tends to her in his nearby flat. Joe tells him about her life and sexual adventures in a series of ‘chapters’.

1. ‘The Compleat Angler’. Joe recalls the loss of her virginity at 15. She and her friend B compete to seduce men on a train.

2. ‘Jerôme’. Joe and her friends form a club devoted to combating love. She starts work in an office where her boss turns out to be Jérôme, her first lover.

She repels his advances, only to fall in love with him, but he marries another woman and leaves.

3. ‘Mrs H’. Joe maintains an intensely active sex life. She and her married lover H are confronted by his wife.

4. ‘Delirium’. Joe recalls her nature-loving father and his agonising death in hospital.

5. ‘The Little Organ School’. Seligman compares Joe’s enjoyment of multiple lovers to the musical art of polyphony. Jérôme and Joe resume their relationship but she loses her sexual feeling.

Nymph()maniac Volume 2

Denmark/Germany/France/Belgium/Sweden/Norway 2013
Director: Lars von Trier

Reviewed by Jonathan Romney

There's plenty to be said about what the *Nymph()* *maniac* diptych appears to be but let's suppose that it is just what the title proclaims: a film about sex. (And we can't know entirely just what kind of film about sex until we've seen the reputedly hardcore uncut version, the first part to be unveiled at the Berlin festival.) The immediate observation is that *Nymph()* *maniac* is ultimately about sex as something that makes no one happy – neither the heroine, Joe, who experiences it, nor her male partners, nor the bystanders affected by her liaisons. This latter theme provides the film's single most affecting episode: a deliciously uncomfortable comedy of embarrassment featuring a magnificently intense performance from Uma Thurman as the wife of Joe's lover H, who storms into Joe's flat, bringing her confused children to add to the agony.

Overall the film could be regarded as a series of variations on female sexual experience, from the comic to the tragic, taking in genre variations in the mode of horror (the S&M section) and the thriller (the 'chapter' entitled 'The Gun'). What links them is the constant of excess, the titular 'mania'. It's this excess, and the refusal of moderation, that Joe reclaims as a guiding principle. The film's very title stands as a badge of honour; her therapist insists that the word 'nymphomaniac' is outmoded, to be replaced by 'sex addict', but Joe will have none of it, inveighing against "society's morality police" and proudly declaring, "I am a nymphomaniac and I love myself being one."

But does she love herself, and does the film love her? The concepts of morality and judgement are questioned throughout, by Joe and by her interlocutor Seligman; but at the start, Joe seems racked by self-hatred, declaring herself "just a bad human being". She soon recants, saying, "I've always demanded more from the sunset... That's perhaps my only sin." But the narrative, and the character of Joe (played by Charlotte Gainsbourg and, as the younger Joe, Stacy Martin, who dominates *Volume 1*), go through so many changes that it's hard to know, finally, whether we're invited to form a stable picture of Joe and her desire, let alone to decide whether we see her as a secular martyr or an all-destroying Messalina.

Destructive as it ultimately seems in the film, sex is also represented, if not wholeheartedly as a force of liberation or self-realisation, then nevertheless as a vital factor. Sex at least generates change and narrative propulsion, as opposed to Seligman's arid cerebral approach to life, introspective and tending towards decay (witness the mouldering claustrophobia of his flat). There are moments, largely in *Volume 1*, when sex appears as a source of pleasure akin to art: young Joe, 'orchestrating' three lovers, is practising her version of a Bachian fugue. Despite the eerily ghost-like pallor of Stacy Martin, young Joe is manifestly seen to be revelling in the sex itself and the approaches to it, especially when triumphantly reeling in a reluctant married commuter.

But as a diptych, the film roughly divides into the panels 'Pleasure' and 'Pain'. Pleasure runs out for Joe at the end of *Volume 1*, when she tells her lover Jérôme that she's lost all sexual feeling. Sex



Three to tango: Kookie Ryan, Charlotte Gainsbourg, Papou

with him no longer works, and she decides she needs to look for danger. This gives rise to the film's most contentious section, in which Joe hires an interpreter to solicit two African men, who stand naked talking over her, erect penises wagging, while she listens bemused to their unfamiliar language. Debate will no doubt rage

Synopsis

Joe continues to tell her story to Seligman. She recalls having quasi-mystical orgasmic experiences as a girl.

6. 'The Eastern and the Western Church (The Silent Duck)': In a restaurant, Joe inserts spoons into her vagina. She becomes pregnant by Jérôme and has a son. With Jérôme unable to satisfy her, Joe seeks new experiences. She has a rendezvous with two African men, then starts visiting a dominator called K for S&M sessions. Jérôme leaves her, taking their child.

7. 'The Mirror': Joe reluctantly attends therapy for sex addiction.

8. 'The Gun': Joe starts working as a debt collector. One of her subjects resists torture but Joe discovers his weakness: he is secretly a paedophile. Joe's employer L suggests she should appoint a successor, and she grooms a teenage girl, P, who becomes her lover. Joe is commissioned to collect money from Jérôme, and sends P to do the job – only for P to start an affair with Jérôme. Joe tries unsuccessfully to shoot him; P and Jérôme assault Joe and leave her in the alley where Seligman finds her.

Joe's story is over. The supposedly asexual Seligman tries to have sex with her. In the dark, Joe's gun is fired and someone runs away.

Credits for this film are the same as 'Nymph()maniac Volume 1', and are listed opposite on page 86

about whether this is racism on von Trier's part or his joke about being perceived as racist; either way, it's an uncomfortable scene to watch.

Volume 2 stages a cruel assault both on Joe's psyche and on her body: it's hard not to feel that the film is being as punitive as S&M master K when it tells us that Joe's vagina has been rubbed raw from masturbation. Her punishment takes literal form in the K episode, with close-ups of her red, freshly birched arse. Joe receives her most horrific punishment in the last chapter, in which – having attained a form of quasi-incestuous lesbian rapture with protégée P – she's brutalised and abused by P and Jérôme.

Does this martyrification, or the narrating of its process, redeem or cleanse Joe at the end? And are redemption and cleansing in any case what we should be looking for in this story? Von Trier leaves the matter open: in a bitter twist, even the monk-like Seligman can't leave Joe alone. The whole shaggy-dog story, or dogged shag story, ends with one person (probably but not necessarily Joe) shooting the other and then running; thus leaving Joe no escape from the infernal circle of sex – or alternatively, it comes to an abrupt tragic close, if we believe that it's Joe who gets shot.

The film finally leaves you not knowing where you stand – weighing up the possibilities that *Nymph()maniac* is an expression of hysterical misogyny, a critique thereof or a dialogue between the two positions. As always on first exposure to a new von Trier, you're aware that the film doesn't really exist until the wider critical controversy has blossomed; as always, you have to end by saying, "Now discuss."

1

USA 2012
Director: Paul Crowder
Certificate 12A 111m 34s

Reviewed by Matthew Taylor

Paul Crowder's documentary history of Formula 1 and its chequered safety record is bookended by a sight familiar to even the most casual viewer of the sport: a race car at full throttle spinning out of control, disintegrating in mid-air and finally rebounding horribly off a crash barrier. On the soundtrack, commentator Murray Walker fears the worst. Incredibly, the car's driver, Martin Brundle, emerges from the wreck dazed but totally unscathed. After some brief time out – and to Walker's audible amazement – he hops into a new car and rejoins the circuit. In a less enlightened era of motor racing – one that 1 largely focuses on – a crash of this kind would almost certainly have proved fatal. In fact it occurred only two years after the deaths in 1994 of Ayrton Senna and Roland Ratzenberger prompted the radical and long-overdue safety overhauls that have thus far prevented further tragedy on the Grand Prix stage.

Crowder's lively, engaging film – which for the publicity purposes has the subtitle "Life on the Limit" – has a potentially tricky balancing act to perform. Part celebration of a sport, part lament for its fallen stars, it has to convey the exhilaration and compulsion associated with risk-taking while adequately representing its sometimes terrible cost. On the whole it succeeds – the style is kinetic but rarely overbearing or mawkish. There are frequent digressions into famous rivalries and personalities but this is because they mostly play a key part in the tortuous evolution of F1 over the decades, from a pursuit that once blithely accepted death as an occupational hazard to one where it's now almost unthinkable.

As the rather prosaic narration (spoken by Michael Fassbender) relates, the first post-war racers – including stars such as the Argentine Juan Manuel Fangio – were seen as daredevil equivalents of fighter pilots. Drivers from several eras speak frankly about the allure of danger that led them back to the circuit over



Inner rush: François Cevert

and over, even as already derisory protective measures failed to catch up with rapid advances in vehicular technology. Former champion Jackie Stewart, who took early retirement in 1973 following the death of rising star François Cevert and campaigned ceaselessly for safety reforms, refers to the 'limit' of the subtitle: as cars became faster and engines grew more powerful, drivers, promoters and fans alike were eager to see the envelope pushed. But accident-prevention remained stuck in the past.

Stewart is one of a stellar line-up of drivers and team members interviewed, many of whom were close to those who lost their lives during the perilous 60s and 70s. Damon Hill, the son of rakish champion Graham Hill, recalls growing up within the coterie of wives and families that toured circuits in the glamorous early 60s, before accidents became all too commonplace (his father's regular rival, Scotsman Jim Clark, was killed in 1968). Smartly assembled archive footage reveals the personalities behind the wheel, not least legendary *bon viveur* James Hunt, whose rivalry with Austrian Niki Lauda was dramatised in Ron Howard's recent *Rush*. The titanic Hunt vs Lauda battle makes up a sizeable chunk of the documentary's mid-section, a gambit that initially seems gratuitous for its length. But its culmination – the fiery crash that left Lauda alive but disfigured – was another crucial landmark, an incident that gave rise to an improved medical presence at future races.

Away from the track, the sometimes controversial figures of F1 supremo Bernie Ecclestone and former FIA president Max Mosley are shown in a positive light, credited with being instrumental in improving standards. The late Professor Sid Watkins, whom Ecclestone hired as F1's official doctor in 1978, makes an affecting appearance in an archive interview, rueing the loss of Senna, a close friend. The iconic Brazilian effectively closes 1's timeline, marking a sea change within the sport. As a result, the film may not be the definitive chronicle of Formula 1 – but it is a vital, illuminating tribute. **S**

Only Lovers Left Alive

USA/United Kingdom/Germany/France/Cyprus/Greece 2013
Director: Jim Jarmusch
Certificate 15 122m 57s

See feature
on page 50

Reviewed by Nick Bradshaw

How does a millennium-old culture-vulture stave off ennui? Lest you be weary of pop culture's perennial vampire lust, Jim Jarmusch's slow-shuffling spin on the mythos puts world-weariness at its heart; its graven protagonists, long-in-the-tooth beatniks who shun the human rat-race by both necessity and inclination, seem less at risk from exposure to sunlight or vampire hunters than from moral and artistic despondency in the face of humanity's vaguely defined but incontrovertible depredations and deficiencies. Moping in the dark may be a vampire's lot but it's come to something when they identify with toadstools.

We first meet Adam (Tom Hiddleston) and Eve (Tilda Swinton), Jarmusch's vampire lovers-for-the-ages, at the tail end of one of their sojourns on different continents – she keeping company with an undead Christopher Marlowe (John Hurt) in the backstreets of Tangiers, he skulking low, scoring rock 'n' roll arcana off an eager roadie-type called Ian (Anton Yelchin) and recording private drone music in the appropriately enervated environs of ex-urban Detroit. They Skype (is vampire metadata scoopable?), and Jarmusch gives a flavour of their different states of mind by technological means: while Eve rolls around with an iPhone, Adam has strung together an old CRT TV and camera with a mess of wires. Is he a retro junkie or just a late adopter? You can take his vinyl collection as given; he also runs a Jaguar XJ-S around Motown – a backhanded tribute to America's own hollowed-out motor city, surely – and insists on wearing a 1970s stethoscope as part of his medical blood-fetching disguise, even when told it's "to all practical purposes an antique". Then again, as an acolyte of Nikola Tesla, he also keeps his own magical-tech underground electricity generator and bemoans the "zombie shit" that constitutes messy human overhead wiring, with no sense of irony about his Skype set-up. (Terming humans 'zombies' is the sort of down-tempo joke the film ticks along on.)

So what's bumming him out so much that he's commissioned a special Dalbergia-wood bullet from Ian, presumably the sort a vampire needs to cut his immortal coil? "It's the zombies – the way they treat the world," he tells Eve, and later, "It's the zombies I'm sick of, and their fear of their own fucking imaginations." One should of course be wary of conflating the views of a creator with his creations, but this did put me in mind of Jarmusch's own words in Michael Obert's recent *Song from the Forest*, a documentary about the musicologist Louis Sarno, who forsook western civilisation some quarter of a century ago to live with the Bayaka pygmies of Central Africa and happens to be a friend and old college roommate of Jarmusch. (The film also affords a glimpse of Jarmusch with his partner, the filmmaker Sara Driver, credited in *OLLA* for "instigation and inspiration".) "We're kind of outsiders and always will be," says Jarmusch of his bond with Sarno. "We're not trusting the economic system, the political system, the social system, even the infrastructure; seeing how ridiculously greedy and self-centred people with

Credits and Synopsis

Produced by
Nigel Sinclair
Michael Shevloff
Written by
Mark Monroe
Director of Photography
Paul Lang
Editor
Paul Crowder
Music
Matter
Production
Sound Mixer
Paul Miller

©Fast Track
Firms USA, LLC
Production Companies
A Spitfire Pictures,
Flat-Out Films,
Diamond Docs
production
Executive Producers
Guy East
Glen Zipper
Alex Brunner
Tobin Armbrust

Narrator
Michael Fassbender

In Colour
[1.78:1]

Distributor
Studiocanal Limited

10,041 ft +0 frames

Publicity title
1 Life on the Limit

A documentary charting the history of Formula 1 motor racing, with a particular focus on the sport's inherent dangers and how safety measures have evolved over time. Using archive footage and interviews with drivers, team sponsors, organisers and medical staff, the film examines the risks taken by drivers seeking glory and the neglectful management that has in the past led to tragedy. The death of Ayrton Senna in 1994 is cited as a breaking point, after which safety procedures were finally overhauled. No fatalities have been recorded at a Grand Prix since.



Bringing out the undead: Tom Hiddleston, Tilda Swinton

power are... not wanting parental authorities or police authorities or governments or borders or territories or nationalism; not believing in the kind of racism or apartheid that we still have in America... not feeling comfortable with what we're told is the way the world is."

In Adam's world this righteous rebel scepticism risks sliding into a kind of occult elitism in which human achievements are reassigned (Shakespeare was a fraud, we're told – the vampire Marlowe wrote all his works – and Adam composed one of Schubert's string quartets for him), while vampires nowadays keep their art and wisdom to themselves (it's unclear who's been leaking mp3s of Adam's recent drone-rock works to the world, but you do wonder if he mightn't try promulgating his clean-energy nous a bit to, like, save the world). Encountering a scintillating performance by the Lebanese singer Yasmin Hamdan in Tangiers toward the film's close, Adam sneers at the notion she might become famous: "God, I hope not. She's way too good for that."

Let us excuse Adam with the mental disarray born of depression (he also insists he has no heroes, when the framed photographs on his wall surely show otherwise). Swinton's apparently

elder Eve, more a free-spirited muse type, lists the pursuits that keep her living in the moment: "Surviving, appreciating nature, nurturing friendships... and dancing". Indeed, the film is most endearing when it shuts up and gets its groove on, finding the blissful element in its slow funk. Music, sex and blood libations all come together in a series of montages steeped in slow dissolves and spinning overhead shots that make you expect the velvet sofas and Turkish carpets to take off and fly. The cuts between Detroit and Tangiers aren't especially redolent (I thought of the more telling dialectic in another recent documentary, Sabine Gruffat's *I Have Always Been a Dreamer*, which compares Detroit past and present with Dubai present and future), but the shots of the lovers touring an overgrown, tumbledown Detroit under a full moon are manna to the vampire genre, and while most of us live more in the shadow of an acceleration towards death than of too much time on our hands, there's a wistful fantasia of eternal love in here, elaborating (though Adam might not like to hear it) the sentiments of Bruce Springsteen's 'Cover Me': "This whole world is out there just trying to score, I've seen enough I don't want to see any more..."

Credits and Synopsis

Produced by

Jeremy Thomas

Reinhard Brundig

Written by

Jim Jarmusch

Director of

Photography

Yorick Le Saux

Editor

Afonso Gonçalves

Production Designer

Marco Bittner Rosser

Music

Jozef Van Wissem

Sound Designer

Robert Hein

Costume Designer

Bina Daigeler

@Wrongway

Inc. Recorded

Picture Company

Ltd., Pandora

Film, Le Pacte, &

Sanderfin Ltd.

Production

Companies

Jeremy Thomas and

Reinhard Brundig

present a Recorded

Picture Company,

Pandora Film, Snow

Wolf production

In association with

Falro House, Le

Pacte, Hanway Films

In co-production with

ARDD Degeto, Lago

Film GmbH, Neue

Road Movies GmbH

With the support

of Film- und

Medienstiftung

NRW, Filmförderungsanstalt

Filmförderung

Hamburg Schleswig-

Holstein, Deutscher

Filmförderfonds

This production

participated in

the New York

State Governor's

Office for Motion

Picture & Television

Development's

Post Production

Credit Program

A film by Jim

Jarmusch

Executive Producers

Christos V.

Konstantakopoulos

Jean Labadie

Bart Walker

Stacey Smith

Peter Watson

Cast

Tilda Swinton

Eve

Tom Hiddleston

Adam

Mia Wasikowska

Ava

Anton Yelchin

Ian

Jeffrey Wright

Dr Watson

Slimane Dazi

Bilal

John Hurt

Marlowe

Dolby Digital/

DTS/SDDS

In Colour

[1.85:1]

Distributor

Soda Pictures

11,065 +8 frames

Paranormal Activity: The Marked Ones

USA 2013, Director: Christopher Landon
Certificate 15 84m 3s

Reviewed by Kim Newman

Screenwriter Christopher Landon has scripted three previous *Paranormal Activity* sequels, elaborating and complicating the mythology of Oren Peli's straightforward haunting. Now, he steps up to director and continues to interlace the past and the present, introducing guest cast from earlier films and even a time-travel door that allows characters to wander into the house from the first *Paranormal Activity* during the demon's initial manifestation.

Whereas the earlier films had a chilly middle-class milieu and were marked by fixed position camera framings or remote-controlled pans, this evokes a livelier Latino world and a jittery style, including handheld shaky-cam, rough edit ellipses and crazy angles that set up hand-at-the-edge-of-the-frame scares. The attenuated story is evolving and Landon gives more on the MO of 'the midwives' – the cult behind the horrors – as he switches to a storyline that vaguely evokes 2012's *Chronicle*. Jesse (Andrew Jacobs), the engaging lead, picks up an invisible guardian (not a guardian angel) which sees off muggers and catches him if he tries to fall, but the tone gets darker as the spirit becomes more powerful and malign.

This manifests not only in glowering and psychic powers but also, affecting, in Jesse breaking off his friendship with the puzzled, hurt Hector (Jorge Diaz), who nevertheless insists on attempting to save him. Without trying too hard, this allows an emotional connection with the hero's friends and family which means that the downbeat finish has a dramatic punch beyond simple shouts of boo. **S**

Credits and Synopsis

Produced by

Jason Blum

Oren Peli

Written by

Christopher Landon

Based on the film

Paranormal Activity

by Oren Peli

Director of

Photography

Gonzalo Amat

Edited by

Gregory Plotkin

Production

Designer

Nathan Amundson

Sound Mixers

Walter Anderson

Ed Novick

Steve Nelson

Costume Designer

Marylou Lim

@Paramount

Pictures Corporation

Production

Companies

Paramount

Pictures presents a

Blumhouse/Solana

Films/Room 101,

Inc. production

With the

participation of The

State of California

and the California

Film Commission

Executive Producer

Steven Schneider

Cast

Jorge Diaz

Hector Estrella

Andrew Jacobs

Jesse Arista

Gabrielle Walsh

Marisol Vargas

Richard Cabral

Arturo Lopez

Noemi Gonzalez

Evette Arista

Carlos Pratts

Oscar Lopez

David Saucedo

Cesar Arista

Renee Victor

Irma Arista

Micah Sloat

Micah

Katie Featherston

Katie

Dolby Digital/

Datasat

In Colour

[1.85:1]

Distributor

Paramount

Pictures UK

7,564ft +8 frames

Venerable vampire lovers Adam and Eve live apart; he records music at home in Detroit while she tends her ancient friend Christopher Marlowe in Tangiers. They keep in touch via video call and are sustained by clean, black-market blood supplies. Adam's low morale, and mutually dreamt portents of Eve's sister Ava, lead Eve to fly to Adam in Detroit. They

are soon joined by the disruptive, irresponsible Ava, but part bitterly from her after she drinks the blood of Adam's closest human contact. They flee to Tangiers and bid farewell to an ailing Marlowe, who has succumbed to tainted blood. Stirred by an impassioned nightclub singer's performance, they sink their teeth into a pair of fresh young lovers.

Oxnard, California, 2012. When elderly neighbour Anna is murdered, teenagers Jesse and Hector break into her apartment to look around. An invisible force starts protecting Jesse, who then falls under a demonic influence. Hector learns that Anna was part of a cult, whose members arrange for orphan boys to become possessed. Hector and friends track Jesse to the coven's hideout, where all are overwhelmed by witches and demons.

Ride Along

USA/Japan 2013
Director: Tim Story
Certificate 12A 99m 36s

Reviewed by Adam Nayman

Twenty-five years after he (in)famously exhorted listeners to “fuck tha police”, Ice Cube flashes a badge in *Ride Along* – a movie that does its damndest to get laughs out of scenarios involving police brutality. When Cube’s hotshot Atlanta PD detective intimidates an unarmed suspect by holding a gun under his chin while flashing a badge, it’s precisely the sort of abuse-of-power tableau the rapper might have conjured up in his NWA days. But it’s made ugly by its staging as farce, and also by Cube’s glib indifference to what veteran hip-hop heads should consider a turncoat move.

The tension between its fortysomething star’s faded gangsta cred and his current status as a brand-name headliner is the most interesting thing about *Ride Along*, which pairs him with the short-statured comedian Kevin Hart. Their veteran-rookie dynamic is meant as a comic, deracinated variation on *Training Day* (2001); Hart has the Ethan Hawke role, even if he gets to quote Denzel Washington’s most famous line from the earlier film. His Ben Barber is a high-school security guard and videogame addict whose long-term girlfriend Angela (Tika Sumpter) is gently prodding him to find a grown-up job.

Accepted into the local police academy, Ben turns to his prospective brother-in-law for career advice. That’d be James (Cube), who hates Ben with a passion and sees an opportunity to wreck the engagement. Feigning supportiveness, he invites the younger man to join him on a 24-hour patrol, all the while planning to shame him into giving up on the job – and his relationship. But after some requisite embarrassing slapstick setbacks, including a run-in with a motorcycle gang and some hijinks at a firing range, Ben shows that he has what it takes to walk the thin blue line.

Hart, who has parlayed his lack of height into a cosy running gig as Hollywood’s go-to short person, is a frantically determined comedian. His style is predicated on slugging away to the



Straining day: Ice Cube, Kevin Hart

point of exhaustion; he’s a flyweight boxer trying to win a heavyweight title bout on points. With his broad shoulders and lumpy physique, Cube makes for an adequate punching bag but never really musters much of a counterattack. And director Tim Story, who coached the best performance of Cube’s career in 2002’s *Barbershop*, doesn’t push his star at all.

Actually, Story doesn’t do much of anything. He’s certainly not interested in elevating the über-generic material. Even the opening action sequence, which finds James laying waste to half a city in pursuit of a suspect, is lazy (as opposed to satirical, as it was in Adam McKay’s *The Other Guys*, 2010). A plotline about James uncovering corruption in his department is telegraphed in advance, and the film’s third-act transformation into a straight-up genre picture (including some violent gunplay) is unconvincing, nudging Sumpter’s generally likeable performance into damsel-in-distress territory. The noticeably abrupt ending suggests reshoots while leaving things open for an inevitable and, it goes without saying, inessential sequel. **S**

Credits and Synopsis

Produced by
Will Packer
Ice Cube
Matt Alvarez
Larry Brezner
Screenplay
Greg Coolidge
Jason Mantzoukas
Phil Hay
Matt Manfredi
Story
Greg Coolidge
Director of Photography
Larry Blanford
Edited by

Craig Alpert
Production Designer
Chris Cornwell
Music
Christopher Lennertz
Production Sound Mixer
Mary H. Ellis
Costume Designer
Sekinah Brown

©Universal Studios
Production Companies
Universal Pictures
presents in

association with
Relativity Media
a CubeVision/
Rainforest Films
production
A Tim Story film
Presented in
association with
Dentsu Inc./
Fuji Television
Network, Inc.
Completed with
assistance from
the Georgia Film,
Music & Digital
Entertainment Office

Executive Producers
Nicolas Stern
Ron Muhammad
Chris Bender
JC Spink

Cast
Ice Cube
James Payton
Kevin Hart
Ben Barber
John Leguizamo
Santiago
Bruce McGill
Lieutenant Brooks

Tika Sumpter
Angela Payton
Bryan Callen
Miggs
Laurence Fishburne
Omar
Dragos Bucur
Marko
Gary Owen
Crazy Cody
Jacob Latimore
Ramon
Jay Pharoah
Runflat
Benjamin 'Lil P-Nut' Flores Jr

Morris The Kid

Dolby Digital/ Datasat In Colour [2.35:1]

Distributor
Universal Pictures
International
UK & Eire

8,964 ft +0 frames

Atlanta, the present. Detective James Payton has spent several years trying to capture mysterious underworld leader Omar. While James clashes with his superiors over his unconventional tactics, his sister Angela is preparing to marry her fiancé Ben Barber, a cheerful underachiever who spends his time playing videogames. Horrified to learn that Ben has applied to the police academy, James invites him to ride along on patrol, contriving to place him in situations where he will fail. Ben demonstrates little aptitude for police work but his knowledge of weapons, derived from videogames, allows him to pick up on a clue about one

of Omar’s arms deals. Ben realises that James is trying to humiliate him and nearly gets both of them killed in a standoff at a strip-club. James gets a call about a big deal going down in a warehouse. When he arrives, he’s taken hostage by his partners, who have been working for Omar all along. Remembering that Omar’s identity is unknown, Ben bluffs his way into the meeting by pretending to be the big man himself. The real Omar arrives and a shootout ensues. Ben is hit in the leg and taken to hospital. Omar and his men capture Angela. James and a morphine-addled Ben rush to Angela’s apartment, subdue the villains and arrest Omar.

The Square

USA/Egypt/United Kingdom 2013
Director: Jehane Noujaim
Certificate 15 108m 17s

Reviewed by Michael Brooke

Already revised and expanded since its Sundance premiere in January 2013, Jehane Noujaim’s documentary about the revolution that began in Egypt two years earlier is all too conscious that it is recording and analysing unfinished business – as one of its commentators, British-Egyptian actor Khalid Abdalla, ruefully admits: “We won’t know if this revolution has succeeded for decades.” In short, Noujaim’s film is the equivalent of a hypothetical Soviet documentary from 1919 that merely spans the February Revolution to the start of the civil war.

However, the Russian Revolution was so poorly documented on film that clips from Sergei Eisenstein’s polemically exaggerated reconstruction *October* (1928) turn up in history programmes, whereas Noujaim was spoilt for choice. Although she filmed extensively in and around Tahrir Square from January 2011 onwards, her film is augmented by footage both from news channels (some breath-catching aerial views revealing the vast scale of the protests) and amateur videos, the latter often contextualised by one of the many YouTube broadcasts that ensured the revolution remained permanently visible for those who cared to look, even if the BBC and CNN seemed to lose interest after President Hosni Mubarak’s resignation on 11 February 2011.

Whereas the latter event provided the climax of Ibrahim El-Batout’s far more sombre and reflective *Winter of Discontent* (2012), here it comes almost at the film’s start, with Noujaim’s focus thereafter amounting to “OK, now what?” By focusing on half a dozen people with their own distinct take on events (although two of them, identified only as Aida and Pierre, are swiftly eclipsed), she depicts the uncertainty felt by the protesters in the immediate wake of Mubarak’s departure. The crowds disperse with no real guarantee that the state apparatus, with its secret police and history of random arrests and torture, will be properly dismantled and replaced by a genuinely democratic constitution.

Although, as with Gillo Pontecorvo’s at times not dissimilar (albeit entirely reconstructed) *The Battle of Algiers* (1966), there is no serious doubt about the filmmaker’s own position, Noujaim was canny enough to alight on a member of the Muslim Brotherhood as one of her central figures. Far from the one-note jihad-preaching Islamist of tabloid infamy, Magdy Ashour emerges as a complex man torn between loyalty towards his more sceptical friends and his genuine belief that the greater encroachment of Islam is the key to Egypt’s salvation. But former street vendor Ahmed Hassan sees things differently; he is keen to prevent Egypt going down Iran’s post-1979 path but is also well aware that the more democracy-minded protesters are nowhere near as well organised as the Brotherhood (which duly saw its man, Mohammed Morsi, elected president).

Despite lacking the fame and connections of the English-speaking Khalid (*United 93*, *The Kite Runner*) or the sudden celebrity of protest singer Ramy Essam (whose anti-Mubarak songs caught the popular imagination in early 2011), the likeable, charismatic Ahmed rapidly emerges as the film’s strongest human embodiment of the revolution’s ideals. He regularly makes

Stalingrad

Director: Fyodor Bondarchuk
Certificate 15 130m 43s

Reviewed by Trevor Johnston

Given its status as a turning-point in WWII and the staggering losses it involved on both Russian and Axis sides – estimates suggest more than 1.7 million killed or wounded – it's unsurprising that the Battle of Stalingrad has attracted filmmakers over the decades. Where Josef Vilsmaier's 1993 German offering *Stalingrad* used the plight of doomed Wehrmacht soldiers as an indictment of a command strategy warped by Nazi ideology, Jean-Jacques Annaud's lavish 2001 release *Enemy at the Gates* explored the gulf between the propaganda war and individual motivations on both sides, though it was essentially a showcase for explosive spectacle combining large-scale physical effects with the latest CGI. Since Fyodor Bondarchuk's new film is the latest Russian title to be released in 3D IMAX (though the print under review is the standard 3D version), it inevitably shares some of the same contradictions, extolling patriotic sacrifice while evidently luxuriating in the opportunity afforded for pyrotechnic display.

As in Annaud's film, the dividing line between the real art direction in the foreground and the digital mayhem in the background remains very obvious, perhaps even exacerbated by 3D depth perspective, though it also shows how filmmaking practice has moved on in that the colour-controlled, burnished artificiality of the visuals (influenced by Zack Snyder's *300*, claims Bondarchuk) evokes the realm of videogaming rather than the newsreel-influenced historical veracity of previous Stalingrad movies.

This is certainly rammed home in an early set piece in which the Nazis' detonation of their own fuel dump engulfs the advancing Russians in flames and yet the infantrymen continue to attack while on fire, open-mouthed screams outlining dental work against the black of their charred flesh. Utterly ridiculous it is too, but the metaphor of burning fervour defending the homeland is the salient point, evidently chiming with nationalist feelings in Putin's Russia if the film's strong showing at the home box office is anything to go by. It's too easy for western critics to sound disapproving of those sentiments but, given the mind-numbing losses suffered in the defence and recapture of Stalingrad, such emotions are understandably a continuing reality in the Russian psyche. They are, however, of less significance in the international marketplace and it's intriguing to see how Bondarchuk and his writers have essentially depoliticised the film, making little mention of Hitler, Stalin or their contrasting ideological motivations while offering



The gathering storm: *The Square*

soapbox speeches to crowds of 40 or 50 ("Usually, 20 agree with me"), and his conversations with Magdy show a refreshing willingness not to let ideological differences undermine personal friendships. He's also demonstrably prepared to put his personal safety on the line (a handheld shot of him running towards baton-wielding, tear-gas-spraying soldiers is rendered more vivid by the realisation that the camera operator was taking similar risks) and at one point is badly beaten – as was Ramy during an earlier protest. (Magdy also bears the physical scars of pre-2011 interrogations.)

Much of the film was shot at street level, to the extent that prior broad-brush familiarity with recent Egyptian history is recommended, though intertitles add some useful anchor points.

Recent events have serendipitously helped the present version of the film become more dramatically effective than the original cut: neither Noujaim nor her colleagues are blind to the irony of the film being bookended by two massive protests (the ones opposing President Morsi being substantially larger than the original anti-Mubarak ones) or that the position of the string-pulling armed forces is decidedly fluid. Regarded with understandable fear and loathing for most of the film, they're ultimately the ones who depose Morsi and offer at least the faint hope of genuine progress to a secular democracy. What happens next is clearly beyond the film's scope (barring further revisions) but at present *The Square* offers the most vivid you-are-there account of Egypt's popular uprisings yet seen. **S**

Credits and Synopsis

Produced by

Karim Amer
Cinematography
Muhammed Hamdy
Ahmed Hassan
Jehane Noujaim
Cressida Trew
Edited by
Pedro Kos
Christopher
de la Torre

Pierre Haberer
Muhammed El
Manasterly
Stefan Ronowicz
Original Score
H. Scott Salinas
Sound Recording
Ahmed Fathy
Mahmoud Zaghloul
Karim Amer

©[no company given]
Production Companies
Netflix presents
a Noujaim Films
production
In co-production with
Maktube Productions
In association
with Roast Beef
Productions, City

Drive Entertainment
Group and Worldview
Executive Producers
Daniel E. Catullo III
Gavin Dougan
Geraldyn Dreyfous
Jodie Evans
Alexandra Johns
Sarah Johnson
Mike Lerner
Khalil Noujaim

Lekha Singh
Jeff Skoll
Lisa Nishimura
Adam Del Deo

Dolby Digital
In Colour
[1.85:1]
Subtitles

Distributor

Kaleidoscope Film
Distribution

9,745 ft +8 frames

Egyptian
theatrical title
Al Midan

Cairo, Egypt, January 2011: former street vendor Ahmed Hassan, Muslim Brotherhood member Magdy Ashour, British-Egyptian actor Khalid Abdalla, singer Ramy Essam and a woman identified as Aida join protests in Tahrir Square against the dictatorial rule of President Hosni Mubarak. 11 February 2011: Mubarak resigns and the crowds disperse, despite many protesters feeling that it's not enough. Spring 2011: the army violently breaks up gatherings in the square and Ramy is badly beaten; General Bekheit says that his men were keeping order. Summer 2011: protesters return to the square, where the formerly proscribed Muslim Brotherhood has a much more visible presence. Ahmed respects Magdy's loyalty but doubts that the Brotherhood can bring the necessary changes. Autumn 2011: anti-regime protests

intensify; a big demonstration results in the death of Mina Daniel, who is regarded as a martyr. During a huge crackdown on protesters, Ahmed is injured. Winter 2011-12: the Muslim Brotherhood wins parliamentary elections. May 2012: Ahmed complains about the two-horse race between a Mubarak crony and the Muslim Brotherhood's Mohammed Morsi, who goes on to win. Winter 2012: Morsi gives himself ever greater powers. Magdy urges Ahmed to be patient but also criticises his own son Assem for his slavish support of Morsi. 30 June 2013: widespread discontent with Morsi leads to an unprecedentedly large demonstration. Morsi is deposed by the army. Ahmed and Magdy reaffirm their friendship despite their differences; Khalid says that the outcome of the revolution won't be known for decades.



The filth and the fury: Thomas Kretschmann

some sympathy for the key German officer (Thomas Kretschmann, a survivor of Vilsmaier's Stalingrad), portrayed as a noble warrior rendered bestial by the horrors of war.

Characterisation is fairly rudimentary throughout, however, sometimes making it tricky to differentiate between the quintet of Russian combatants whose efforts to protect a teenage girl provide the film's central storyline. She also provides the link with the slightly absurd present-day framing device: the film's desperation to find a context of no-hard-feelings cooperation between the two former enemies leads us to an unlikely scenario in which German students trapped under a collapsed building in the aftermath of the 2011 Fukushima earthquake get to hear their Russian rescuer tell them how his mother survived Stalingrad. **S**

Credits and Synopsis

Produced by Sergey Melkumov Anton Zlatopolskiy Dmitriy Rudovskiy Alexander Rodnyanskiy Screenplay Ilya Tilkin Sergey Snezhkin Based on chapters from the novel <i>Life and Fate</i> by Vasily Grossman Director of Photography Maxim Osadchiy Film Editor Igor Litoninskiy Production Designer Sergey Ivanov Music Angelo Badalamenti Sound Designer Rotislav Alimov Costume Designer Tatiana Patrakhaltseva	Production Companies A Non-Stop Production, Art Pictures Studio production With the participation of Twin Media Supported by Russia-1, JSC VTB Bank and Russian Cinema Fund Executive Producer Natalia Gorina	Andrey Smolyakov Polyakov Dimitriy Lysenkov Chvanov Alexey Barabash Nikiforov Oleg Volkov Krasnov Polina Raikina Natashka Anna von Abler Nina Yuriy Vladimirovich Nazarov the gunslayer
	Cast Pyotr Fyodorov Captain Gromov Thomas Kretschmann Captain Peter Kahn Sergey Bondarchuk Astakhov Maria Smolnikova Katya Yana Studilina Masha	In Colour [2.35:1] Subtitles Some screenings presented in 3D Distributor Sony Pictures Releasing 11,764 ft +8 frames

Japan, March 2011. After the Fukushima earthquake, the leader of a Russian team rescuing trapped German students tells the story of his mother's experiences during the Battle of Stalingrad.

Autumn 1942. German forces hold the devastated city while the Russians look to cross the Volga. Captain Gromov leads an advance party over the river but is thwarted in his mission after a tussle with Captain Kahn, who blows up the Germans' own fuel supplies, thus engulfing the advancing Russians in flames. Gromov holds his position in a ravaged building between the German lines and the city's waterfront, discovering its sole remaining resident, battle-shocked 18-year-old Katya. Together with sharpshooter Chvanov, youthful engineer Astakhov, grizzled veteran Polyakov and former star tenor Nikiforov, Gromov faces an uneasy standoff with the Germans across the square. Kahn angers his ferocious colonel by carrying on a secret liaison with a Russian woman, Masha, who reminds him of his late wife. The colonel orders Kahn to retake the building held by Gromov's small group. Knowing that the final attack is coming, Astakhov ushers Katya to the safety of a water tower and the two make love. Kahn leads a tank attack on the building, depleting the Russian defenders, but Gromov kills Kahn and summons a Russian airstrike to obliterate the entire area.

In Fukushima, the Germans thank their rescuer, Sergey Astakhov, who pays tribute to the sacrifices of the wartime generation.

That Awkward Moment

Director: Tom Gormican
Certificate 15 94m 18s

Reviewed by Trevor Johnston

By giving a youngish cast a central conceit with some basis in emotional credibility and adding a defining image of slapstick crudity to provide the water-cooler factor, this formula romcom at least ticks the boxes, though it offers few genre-changing revelations. As the biggest marquee name, former teen idol Zac Efron gets the keynote speech, when his character, New York graphic designer Jason, explains the significance of 'the so' – that point in any liaison where one of the partners asks, "So where is this going?", when there is an opportunity to venture forward into official dating territory or bring things to a halt before someone is hurt. It's an admittedly commonplace insight but it's bound to ring true for the film's target audience, though writer-director Tom Gormican then funnels it into a flimsy plot device that has Efron and his two best mates (sardonic colleague Miles Teller, mysteriously underworked medic Michael B. Jordan) making a combined vow to swear off female attachments, thus supposedly shaping an act of mutual loyalty to be tested as their subsequent romantic misadventures pull them towards – heaven forbid! – emotional commitment with women.

Whether the filmmakers intend the underlying gay frisson this supplies is never really made apparent, though the concerted way in which the trio's bromance contrives to engineer situations for the comedic examination of each other's genitalia does suggest some degree of knowingness. You could even read their womanising as a sexual outlet for the emotional feelings they have for each other, though what comes across more strongly is the absolute hypocrisy that validates the men's enjoyment of casual sex while casting dubious aspersions on any female doing the same – such as Jordan's unfaithful wife or free-spirited Imogen Poots, whom Efron first mistakes for a prostitute because she has boxes of condoms beside her bed.



Thou shalt not commit: Imogen Poots, Zac Efron

It's telling that this evident double standard is never up for discussion, nor indeed does the central trio ever really analyse the fact that they regard any emotional connection with a woman as something shameful to be hidden from the other chaps. Then again, this is obviously not some goatee-stroking arthouse number but functional mainstream fodder, in which attractive young people deliver piquant one-liners. Poots is the only one to bring any depth of feeling to her performance in a thankless part, and the action highlight involves Efron and Teller lying horizontally over the toilet, balanced precariously on the seat and facing downwards, after Viagra-assisted tumescence complicates the otherwise simple act of urination.

Signature gross-out image duly delivered, the film rattles comfortably enough through its paces, even if Efron has little of the comedic finesse a younger Ashton Kutcher might have supplied. The script does finally get ahead of itself when Efron invokes *Jerry Maguire* to convince Teller that a grand romantic gesture is required to make good with swan-necked love-interest Mackenzie Davis (also charming in a wafer-thin part). We get the idea, all right, but Gormican has some way to go before he can be mentioned in the same sentence as primetime Cameron Crowe. **S**

Credits and Synopsis

Produced by Kevin Turen Andrew O'Connor Scott Aversano Justin Nappi Written by Tom Gormican Director of Photography Brandon Trost Edited by Shawn Paper Greg Tillman Production Designer Ethan Tobman Music David Torn Sound Mixer Jack Hutson Costume Designer Anna Bingemann	Gormican Executive Producers Peter Schlessel Lia Buman Zac Efron Jason Barrett Michael Simkin James Gibb Darren Blumenthal Manu Gargi John Friedberg	In Colour [2.35:1] Distributor El Films 8,487 ft +0 frames
Production Companies A Treehouse Pictures production in association with QED, Aversano Films, What If It Barks Films, Ninjas Running Wild Productions A film by Tom	Cast Zac Efron Jason Miles Teller Daniel Michael B. Jordan Mikey Imogen Poots Ellie Mackenzie Davis Chelsea Jessica Lucas Vera Addison Timlin Alana Josh Pais Fred Dolby Digital	

New York, present day. When their doctor friend Mikey is suddenly dumped by his wife, Jason and Daniel, who work together designing book jackets, decide that the trio should swear off female attachments. Daniel appears happy enough keeping a roster of casual sexual partners on the go, but Mikey soon misses his wife and, without telling the others, makes overtures to get back together with her. During a one-night stand with Ellie, Jason is convinced she's a prostitute, and is surprised to discover that she's in fact an author who's just commissioned a jacket from him for her new novel. She's aghast when he explains his error but they make up and begin seeing each other, though it stops short of official dating. Meanwhile Daniel falls for his friend Chelsea, but lies when he says he's told his friends about her. Mikey's seemingly successful attempt to rekindle his marriage comes to an end when his wife declares she no longer loves him. Jason fails to support Ellie at her father's funeral, and arrives drunk at Chelsea's family's Thanksgiving party, where he and Mikey discover Chelsea and Daniel in flagrante in the shower. Chelsea is angry that Daniel has clearly been keeping their relationship secret from his friends. However, she forgives him after he is injured in a hit-and-run accident. Mikey returns to the singles scene with renewed enthusiasm, and a grand gesture at an author's talk convinces Ellie to take Jason back.

Tim's Vermeer

USA 2013
Director: Teller
Certificate 12A 79m 52s

Reviewed by Trevor Johnston

They are, it has to be said, unlikely documentary-makers, yet it's somehow appropriate that two of the foremost stage illusionists of our time, Penn and Teller, should collaborate on a film about the technology behind a great work of art. Penn Jillette's friendship with Tim Jenison, who's made his fortune in video-production technology, sparked a decision to build a feature doc around the latter's obsession with Vermeer's working methods.

There's no historical evidence to tell us how 17th-century Holland's greatest artist achieved the meticulous detail and photographic lighting effects in his canvases, though English academic Philip Steadman's recent book *Vermeer's Camera* suggests he may have used a camera obscura to trace around an image of the subjects arranged in his studio. For Jenison, this doesn't go far enough, since it merely explains the proportion of the outlines in the paintings and not their exquisite gradation of natural light. Invertebrate tinkerer that he is, Jenison comes up with the simple device of a small circular mirror, held at an angle, which enables anyone to match the mirror-image of the subject on canvas. He sets out to demonstrate that if he, an avowed non-artist, can reproduce Vermeer's *The Music Lesson* using this technique, then there's a strong case for Vermeer himself having drawn on such technological assistance for the original.

Watching Jenison, an affably bearded George Lucas lookalike, give his all to proving his hypothesis provides the film with a solid through-line, and if Teller's direction is strictly nuts-and-bolts, his decision to limit the focus to the project at hand – there is, for example, no input from family, friends and so on – is a sound one. Visits to Steadman and a chain-smoking David Hockney (who has himself written on great artists' use of available technology) provide support and encouragement.

Although Jenison's undertaking could be seen as the mere indulgence of a very rich man with too much time on his hands, seeing him working – mixing his own paints using only authentic ingredients, firing and grinding his lenses, even turning furniture legs on his own lathe – makes it hard not to be swept along by his commitment and enthusiasm. It's undeniably engrossing. The film's lengthiest sequence takes



Lighting up the past: Tim Jenison

us through 130 days of sheer toil as Jenison, having meticulously recreated the physical fabric of *The Music Lesson* in a Texas warehouse, sets about getting every micro-detail – every single curl of the decorative virginal in the picture – down on canvas. Although this proves a relatively straightforward process, we marvel at Vermeer's technique and Jenison's dedicated application, and the outcome is impressive enough to make us feel that the latter's unflagging effort has been justified. Surveying his handiwork, he suggests that it now makes Vermeer "a fathomable genius" – a contention justified in the circumstances but predicated on a rather limited view of Vermeer's achievement, primarily focusing on the Dutchman's miraculous facility for transcribing reality into paint.

What's missing here (apart from a shot of Tim's Vermeer side by side with the original, which is held in the Queen's private collection) is any sense that the greatness of *The Music Lesson* is about more than its brushwork, thus omitting the function of the composition, the metaphorical import of the subject matter, the self-reflexive play (a glimpse of the artist's easel) and so forth. Yes, we're duly convinced that Vermeer could have done it with mirrors – but does this really make him "fathomable" when much of the conceptual groundwork rendering him the most endlessly fascinating of old masters may well have taken place before he even touched a brush? Ⓢ

Credits and Synopsis

Produced by
Penn Jillette
Producer
Farley Ziegler
Written by
Penn Jillette
Teller
Director of
Photography
Shane F. Kelly
Editor
Patrick Sheffield
Music by/Conductor
Conrad Pope
Re-recording Mixer
Larry Blake
Film Extracts
Iron Sky/
Rautataivas (2012)

©High Delft
Pictures LLC
Production
Companies
Sony Pictures
Classics in
association with
High Delft Pictures
presents a Penn
& Teller film
Executive Producers
Peter Adam Golden
Glenn S. Alai
Tim Jenison
Teller
In Colour
[1.85:1]
Distributor

Sony Pictures
Releasing
7,188 ft +0 frames

San Antonio, Texas, 2008. Video-technology millionaire Tim Jenison has long been obsessed with the 17th-century Dutch painter Johannes Vermeer and is convinced that the artist used optical instruments to aid his technique. Jenison discovers that projecting an image on to an angled mirror enables even an amateur painter to copy a subject convincingly. He persuades Vermeer expert Philip Steadman and artist David Hockney of the credibility of his methods, though there's no historical evidence to back them up. In a warehouse, Jenison recreates the world of Vermeer's painting 'The Music Lesson' in every detail. He grinds his own lenses and mixes his own paints, using only the resources that would have been available to Vermeer. Putting paint on canvas proves a difficult task. After the varnish has dried on the startlingly Vermeer-like results of his efforts, Jenison breaks down in tears.

Walking with Dinosaurs

United Kingdom/India/USA/Australia 2013
Directors: Barry Cook, Neil Nightingale
Certificate U 87m 25s

Reviewed by Andrew Osmond

Walking with Dinosaurs is a child-friendly introduction to prehistoric life, and a deeply odd example of franchise evolution. It's spun off from the acclaimed BBC quasi-documentary series of the same name and was initially meant to be a wordless film, telling its story completely visually. Like the series, it mixes live-action backdrops with computer-animated dinosaurs, which are generally well realised by the Australian studio Animal Logic.

Thanks to what seems to be an executive decision, the final film has a horribly witless, obnoxious voiceover track, supplied mainly by John Leguizamo and Justin Long. They're meant to be voicing a bird and the 'hero' dinosaur, though the voices aren't mouth-synched to the animals – one of several strange ways in which the film strives incoherently for a veneer of realism. Most of the background creatures seem to be plain animals, while the leads are blatantly anthropomorphised, expressing sibling loyalty or romantic love. However, these confusions are secondary to the execrable commentary track, which ruins the film all by itself. Its Americanisations make one wish that the BBC had dubbed a distinct British version, just as the TV *Walking with Dinosaurs* had different narrators in Britain and America.

Young children may be bored by the film's meandering, makeshift story. It takes some beats from Disney's *Bambi* (1942) but without that film's poetry or any real effort to create engaging characters. Disney also presented a scientifically detached, cinematically magnificent vision of dinosaurs in *Fantasia* (1940). Ironically, *Walking with Dinosaurs* has a former Disney director at the helm: Barry Cook, who made the film with Neil Nightingale of BBC Earth, also directed *Mulan* (1998). Ⓢ

Credits and Synopsis

Produced by
Mike Devlin
Amanda Hill
Deepak Nayar
Screenplay
John Collee
Director of
Photography
John Brooks
Edited by
John Carnochan
Jeremiah O'Driscoll
Animation Director
Marco Marengi
Music
Paul Leonard-
Morgan
Sound Mixer
(Framing Story)
Tony Johnson
Animation and
Visual Effects
Animal Logic

©BBC Earth MD
(WWD) Limited,
Reliance Prodc,
LLC and Evergreen
MD, LLC.
Production

Companies
Twentieth Century
Fox and Reliance
Entertainment
present
in association with
IM Global, a BBC
Earth Films and
Evergreen Studios
production
in association with
Animal Logic
Executive
Producers
Stuart Ford
Marcus Arthur
David Nicksay
Tim Hill
Miles Ketley
Zareh Nalbandian
Cast
John Leguizamo
Alex
Justin Long
Patchi
Tiya Sircar
Juniper
Skyler Stone

Scowler
Angourie Rice
Jade
Charlie Rowe
Ricky
Karl Urban
Uncle Jack

Dolby Digital/
Datasat
In Colour
[2.35:1]

Some screenings
presented in 3D

Distributor
20th Century Fox
International (UK)

7,867 ft +8 frames

Set in prehistoric times, the film tells the story of Patchi, a rhino-like Pachyrhinosaurus dinosaur. He's the runt of his litter but grows over the course of many adventures to become the leader of his herd.

Home cinema



Freaky Friday: Al Pacino and Cornelia Sharpe in Sidney Lumet's *Serpico*

GOOD COPS, BAD COPS

A turning point in American cinema's portrayal of the police, *Serpico* shows its cop hero battling corruption within the ranks

SERPICO

Sidney Lumet; USA 1973; Eureka/Masters of Cinema/Region B Blu-ray and Region 2 DVD Dual Format; Certificate 18; 130 minutes; 1.78:1; Features: theatrical trailer, 'Serpico: Reel to Reel', 'Inside Serpico', 'Serpico: Favourite Moments', booklet

Reviewed by Kim Newman

For decades, American cinema sought a populist genre to replace the western as a form in which good and evil could be embodied in white hats and black hats, and issues of national identity, absolute morality and masculine self-image

could be assessed in the context of audience-pleasing action and excitement. In 1977 *Star Wars* provided the answer; the western proper faded away and all the cowboys climbed into spaceships and swapped their guns for lightsabers. To the present day, the dominant box-office form of mainstream cinema is the science-fiction-and-fantasy-tinged comic-book spectacular. But, in a brief window, it seemed that cops would trump cowboys.

When actor-director Jack Webb's *Dragnet* – a show that dramatised authentic LAPD cases, with “names changed to protect the innocent” – migrated from radio to television in 1951, a brand of badge-wielding urban law and order became familiar and unquestioned in the media. For more than 20 years, cop heroes dominated small and big screens, in all varieties of toughness,

intellect and rigidity; often, the handover from western to policier was made explicit, as in *Coogan's Bluff* and *Fort Apache, the Bronx*. In the movies, Don Siegel offered Richard Widmark as Madigan and Clint Eastwood as Coogan and Dirty Harry; Gene Hackman's Popeye Doyle propelled *The French Connection* to Oscar success; and cop-turned-author Joseph Wambaugh's novels gave rise to *The New Centurions*, *The Choirboys* and *The Onion Field*. On television, procedurals such as *The Streets of San Francisco* and *Police Story* ran alongside personality-led gimmick shows including *Columbo*, *McCloud* (a riff on *Coogan's Bluff*) and *McMillan & Wife*, before evolving into ensemble dramas like *Hill Street Blues* and *Homicide: Life on the Street*. The mismatched cop partnership (in which teams of mixed sexes, races and legal approaches bond to become



For all his shaggy, hippie looks, Serpico could stand beside Joe Friday or Harry Callahan in superhuman rectitude

buddies) became a thing with *Freebie and the Bean* in the movies and *Starsky & Hutch* on TV, then mutated into freakier efforts like *Partners* (gay and straight), *Lethal Weapon* (sane and crazy), *Dead Heat* (dead and alive) and *The Breed* (vampire and human). Cops even crossed over into science fiction via *RoboCop* and *Alien Nation*.

Throughout, the ideal was Webb's Sergeant Joe Friday: upright, deadpan, inflexible, efficient, remote, a stickler for the law. Mr Spock with a badge and gun, Friday is entirely free from the warmth that marked his UK counterpart Sergeant George Dixon of *Dock Green* (Jack Warner) or the sitcom sheriff of *The Andy Griffith Show*. An early idol of James Ellroy, who has mutated the cop form in his entire output (which includes the films *Cop*, *LA Confidential* and *Rampart*), Webb's Friday is interesting only insofar as the actor-auteur's contempt for law-breakers and their associates seems to take in the entire world and render the hero some sort of avenging monster who looks at every perp and witness and suspect with gunsight eyes and should quite rightly terrify everyone who might cross his path.

Then came Frank Serpico. An Italian-American who joined the NYPD as a patrolman in 1959, Serpico raised the issue of endemic corruption in various departments, inspiring Mayor John V. Lindsay to convene the Knapp Commission into police malfeasance. In 1971, the whistleblower was shot in the face by a drug dealer – it was alleged that other officers had failed to support him during a raid and, in effect, set him up for execution. He survived, and Peter Maas's biography *Serpico* became a bestseller, eventually winding up with producer Martin Bregman and mogul Dino De Laurentiis. The property was briefly considered as a Robert Redford-Paul Newman vehicle (Newman would have played Serpico's politically connected lawyer friend David Durk, who is fictionalised as cop Bob Blair, played by Tony Roberts, in the film) before Bregman signed Al Pacino, fresh from *The Godfather*, to star, and John G. Avildsen, fresh from *Joe*, to direct. In the event Avildsen – later to make *Rocky* – left the project and Sidney Lumet took over.

Ironically, Pacino's Serpico – for all his shaggy, hippie looks – could stand beside Joe Friday or Harry Callahan in superhuman rectitude. An eager beaver who hares off on his own to crack cases, even if it makes colleagues look bad, Serpico is uncomfortable with free lunches and won't take a penny of the graft that his colleagues expect as a regular perk of the job. Friday would approve. It's just that the movie depicts every other cop as crooked, so the overall portrait of the police is antithetical to the vision of *Dragnet*. By 1973, after the divisions of the late 1960s, plenty of average Americans were disillusioned by the behaviour of uniformed officers during civil-rights marches or Vietnam protests. A 1967 revival of *Dragnet*, in which Friday busts hippies, protesters and long-haired troublemakers, was taken as camp even by viewers who had grown up with the earlier incarnation of the show. Later, in *The Big Easy* or *The Shield*, there would be nuanced depictions of corrupt cops who



Pacino with Tony Roberts as Bob Blair

were nevertheless good police, but in *Serpico* the official villains are unredeemable. Lumet casts great faces – the pockmarked detective who holds back while Serpico has his arm trapped in a door is a young, unbilled F. Murray Abraham – and the film offers an array of shifty, glad-handing, bullying, sinister or threatening officers.

Though *Serpico* is drawn from Maas's non-fiction book, the film, scripted by Waldo Salt and Norman Wexler, plays loose with the timing. Events take place over a decade, as shown by the transformation of the clean-shaven, short-haired rookie patrolman in neat uniform into a bearded, long-haired, countercultural shambler, but there's no sense of the great shifts in greater society in the 1960s. Frankly, all of *Serpico* seems to take place

In the era of Watergate, paranoia was a dominant mode of American cinema, and 'Serpico' throbs with dangers



The clean-shaven rookie patrolman

in an endless 1973, and the fashions, slang, drugs, music (an unusual score from Mikis Theodorakis) and street vibe are all definitely 70s rather than 60s; when the film gave rise to a shortlived spin-off TV series (anything about a cop could get a season in the 70s) with David Birney, Serpico's anti-corruption campaign was downplayed and stories focused on his undercover drop-out cop cases. Aside from an amusing 'happening' scene in which Serpico freaks out a succession of with-it caricatures when they find out what he does for a living, the drama is all inside the police department rather than in the relationship between cops and civilians. As the *MAD* magazine parody of the film ('Serpicoool') pointed out, the hero seemed to be the only person in New York who didn't know cops were on the take.

It's startling to revisit *Serpico*, with the electric and yet unmannered lead performance of Pacino and the mosaic narrative approach of Lumet, and realise how tough the movie is on its lead character. Even in 1973, the temptation of 'liberal Hollywood' was to make cardboard heroes out of those struggling against endemic evil – this would, presumably, have been what a Robert Redford Serpico might have looked like. But Pacino and Lumet show that one of the sacrifices Serpico makes in his crusade is his own likeability. Unable to partake in the camaraderie of cop partnerships because of his refusal to accept graft, Serpico is also removed from his ethnic family support group by his decision to live where he works rather than in his old neighbourhood. In the course of the film he has one trivial affair, with model-gorgeous Leslie Lane (Cornelia Sharpe), who calmly leaves him to marry someone else. A more serious relationship, with next-door neighbour Laurie (Barbara Eda-Young), collapses as he takes out on her the frustrations of yet another failed attempt to tell the truth. Even his steadfast friend Blair, who bonds with him in a funny moment as a roomful of cops have to sample marijuana, is abused and rejected after his connection to the mayor fails to come through.

There's an *Enemy of the People* aspect to Serpico's story. Pacino digs deep to hint that his persistence has as much to do with bloody-mindedness and hurt pride as altruism and integrity. In the era of Nixon and Watergate, paranoia was a dominant mode of American cinema, and *Serpico* throbs with the dangers of every situation: undercover in plain clothes that make him look like the enemy, Serpico has to dodge bullets fired by a fellow officer while he's making an arrest; called to an informal meeting of his colleagues in the park, he finds himself in the middle of a circle of menacing, accusing officers who feel that a cop who isn't corrupt paradoxically can't be trusted. Attempts to take his story to superiors, internal affairs, the mayor's office or the media are all thwarted, and even his ultimate victory just puts a target on his back. At the end, Serpico is seen alone but for his sole companion, an enormous and equally shaggy sheepdog, slumped on the docks as a caption reveals that the real-life Serpico now lives quietly in Switzerland, perhaps to avoid yet another 'accidental shooting'. ☹

New releases

BATTLE FOR MUSIC

Donald Taylor; UK 1943; Panamint Cinema/Region 0 Blu-ray/Region 0 DVD; 79 minutes; 1.33:1; Features: unreleased version of 'Battle for Music' (75 minutes), 'Musical Poster No. 1' (1940), 'Adeste Fideles' (1941), 'C.E.M.A.' (1942), booklet

Reviewed by David Thompson

Unearthed from the BFI National Archive by the enterprising Panamint Cinema DVD company (which specialises in historical documentaries and films from Scotland), *Battle for Music* is a fascinating account of how the London Philharmonic Orchestra survived the war years through the sheer determination of its players. Originally formed in 1932 by Sir Thomas Beecham (whose name is never mentioned in this film), the LPO competed with the BBC Symphony Orchestra in that decade for recognition as the capital's superior band. But as shown in what might be described as a docudrama, the orchestra was threatened with liquidation in September 1939. The players decided to form a new company and manage themselves; foremost among this group was viola player Thomas Russell, who alongside his fellow musicians plays himself in the film. From there on, each step forward in organising concerts was made difficult by the wartime closures of public venues in London, scheming agents and recurring air raids. But playwright J.B. Priestley helped out with a fundraising 'Musical Manifesto' and bandleader Jack Hylton sponsored concerts in variety halls, until finally the LPO found a new home in the Orpheum in Golders Green.

While the dramatised discussions and encounters are awkwardly performed – the orchestral players put on a brave show but are clearly not natural actors – the main interest of the film is seeing the LPO perform with great musicians of the day, such as pianists Benno Moiseiwitsch and Eileen Joyce and conductors Constant Lambert, Sir Adrian Boult and Sir Malcolm Sargent. Musical numbers are of necessity heavily abridged but performed with great gusto. The real background to the story, only hinted at in the film through the players' ardent desire to take music to 'ordinary people', was that Russell (who became chairman of the orchestra) and several of the others were card-carrying members of the communist party. In the post-war period, this caused problems when the LPO sought public subsidy. Russell was eventually sacked in 1952 after a sustained campaign against him, a particular enemy being none other than Sir Adrian Boult – whom Russell himself had only recently appointed as the orchestra's principal conductor.

Disc: Good transfers of the main feature in its two versions. The extras are from more worn copies but have great historical value.

FILMS BY JAMES BENNING

DESERET/FOUR CORNERS

USA 1995/97; Edition Filmmuseum/Region 0 DVD; 78/76 minutes; 1.37:1; Features: James Benning Q&A (1996), 20-page German/English booklet with essay and stills

Reviewed by Michael Pattison

This is the fourth release in Edition Filmmuseum's ongoing commitment to James Benning's work. Part of what scholars have referred to as Benning's 'text-image' period,

Deseret (1995) and *Four Corners* (1997) are in imagistic terms less dense than, say, *American Dreams* (1984) but are more narratively teasing.

Benning is a mathematician by training, and his structural precision is at its most evident here. *Deseret*, which reveals a selected history of Utah by quoting relevant *New York Times* articles from 1852 to 1992, offers a landscape shot of the eponymous territory for every sentence recited. By allowing his literary source to determine the editorial rhythm, Benning builds up an exhilarating tension: though ostensibly a film about Utah's racial, religious, legal and military history, *Deseret* is just as easily a documentary on the syntactical shifts that characterised American journalism over the course of 14 decades.

In *Four Corners*, the filmmaker takes his own syntax to a mathematical extreme. Named after the point at which the borders of Utah, New Mexico, Arizona and Colorado all meet – and exploring the lives of four artists and landscapes associated with them – the film is divided into four identically structured parts, equal down to the number of letters in the onscreen text with which each segment begins and the number of words in the voiceover narration that follows. This is a distinctly cinematic work, however, continuously drawing attention to the way in which its own quadrilateral frame transforms the meaning of other non-filmic artworks. It might also be Benning's most personal film: in the second section, he reads an autobiographical text about his relationship with black neighbours over an illustration of George Washington by African-American folk-artist Mose Tolliver – a portrait whose breaking of the fourth wall seems to be magnified by the durational quality of the moving image.

Disc: Both films were transferred in gorgeous high definition from 16mm positive prints.

BETTY BLUE

Jean-Jacques Beineix; France 1986; Second Sight/Region B Blu-ray; 185 minutes; 1.66:1; Features: cast-and-crew retrospective, Béatrice Dalle screen test

Reviewed by Charlie Fox

Oh, *Betty Blue*! Has a French film appeared since that's so madly entranced by its bright neon surface as this sickly fairytale? Béatrice Dalle debuts splendidly as the seductive teenage anima dancing through the kind of lurid mental illness that only afflicts movie heroines, before



Lady in red: Béatrice Dalle in *Betty Blue*

eventually suffering the textbook fate of a Victorian hysteric. Indeed, the movie plays out like a long (over three hours in this 'definitive' incarnation) and long-outdated male-anxiety tract about the terrors that strike when a girl's maternal longings are left dangerously unquenched. (Her lover confides, in boys-only moments, that her manic episodes are induced by the moon or her menstrual cycle.) Calmer spells find poor Betty playing the angel in the house, scrubbing a kitchen with the fervour of a speed-freak or typing her boyfriend's (Jean-Hughes Anglade) huge unpublished manuscript – a supposed masterpiece of sluggish metaphors and sticky lyricism – while he smokes or watches a cat.

The couple take a peripatetic drift around a France drunk on whimsy, then stagger into a climax that forgets its tragic import immediately and becomes a lazy repetition of myths about men, making art and the perils of being a muse. But does Jean-Jacques Beineix ever make films to be *thought* about? His cinema is a circus of lightheaded fantasies and it was his gift for carefree spectacle that made *Betty Blue* into an international hit, a glittery symbol of its decade and a source of misty nostalgia. (The past life as a bestselling novel and the promise of humid sex scenes helped too).

Transformed into a floating odyssey of curious interludes, dead-ends, ellipses and unexpected resurrections by an hour's extra footage, this director's cut has too much of its idyllic middle and too many breezy wanderings, leading to a weirdly dissonant whole: erotic comedy follows an unconsciously kitsch aria, which slips into something psychotic before returning to a sunny cavort in a make-believe world. Everything is gorgeous in the decadent style of a shoot from 1980s *Vogue*: interiors moodily aglow, the sky vacant and velvet with shades of blue haunting each immaculate frame – never too dark but always unspeakably lush.

Disc: Exquisite Blu-ray transfer and fine extras – a cast-and-crew retrospective documentary plus Dalle's fuzzy, flirty screen test.

IL BIDONE

Federico Fellini; Italy 1955; Eureka/Masters of Cinema/Region B Blu-ray and Region 2 DVD Dual Format; Certificate 12; 113 minutes; 1.37:1; Features: interview with Dominique Delouche, original theatrical trailer, booklet

Reviewed by Philip Kemp

Premiered at the 1955 Venice Film Festival, *Il bidone* was roundly booed, drawing cries of "Vergogna!" and "Basta!" ("Shame! Enough!"). The Italian critics, echoing the festival audience, almost unanimously loathed it; box-office returns, after the garlanded smash hit of *La strada*, were paltry. Understandably so, perhaps. This is Fellini's most acerbic and disillusioned film, portraying his native Italy as a vulgar, mercenary land inhabited by two classes: the swindlers and the swindled.

International distribution was slow and spasmodic: not until nine years later did *Il bidone* ('The Swindle') get a US release, and then only in a cut version shorn of 17 minutes. Sometimes sandwiched between *La strada* and *Nights of Cabiria* as the centrepiece of the 'trilogy of loneliness', the film still remains



CIVVIES

BBC; UK 1992; Acorn Media/Region 2 DVD;
310 minutes; Certificate 15; 4:3

Reviewed by Sergio Angelini

After 15 years in the Paras, Jason Isaacs finds the going very tough when he lands on Civvy Street in this serial by Lynda La Plante. Made in the wake of her success with the first *Prime Suspect*, it courted controversy with its extreme violence and predictably led to complaints from the military. Traumatized by violence and haunted by memories of a bomb attack in Northern Ireland that left many friends dead or maimed, Isaacs and some of his ex-comrades soon get mixed up with arms dealers, drug smugglers and, slightly further off the beaten track, salmon poachers. His plans to set up a private security firm with his old mates – including drunken waster Peter Howitt, dodgy dealer Eddie O'Connell and soon-to-be married Lennie James (who also belts out the theme song) – are soon undone as resentments and past misdeeds emerge. Nemesis arrives in the shambling form of a London gangster, played in mostly somnolent fashion by Peter O'Toole, who does at least perk up a bit for the downbeat final instalment.

It's all so blunt and unsubtle as to be frequently risible (not helped by an obtrusive music score) and that it should all end in tears is pretty predictable – in fact the only real surprise is that this hackneyed melodrama is set in 1992 rather than 1947.

Disc: Originated on film, the transfer to disc is problem-free. No extras of note.

ELEMENTARY – SEASON 1

Hill of Beans Productions/Timberman-Beverly/
CBS; USA 2012-13; Paramount Home Video/Region
2 DVD; 1,065 minutes; Certificate 15; 16:9; Features:
launch promos, set tour, 'making of' featurettes

Reviewed by Sergio Angelini

The Conan Doyle estate only gets a blink-and-you-miss-it trademark acknowledgement in the closing credits of this diverting entertainment – but then this is a pretty loose adaptation of Sherlock Holmes: Jonny Lee Miller's scruffy and unshaven detective is now based in New York, a tattooed recovering drug addict fresh out of rehab whose father hires Dr Joan Watson (Lucy Liu) to act as his live-in sober companion.

The first half of the season charts their developing friendship and the successful completion of her work contract. After she decides to stay on as a detective, the stories become more serialised, with Irene Adler and Moriarty folded into the continuing narrative. Along the way the team's investigations range from busting Soviet spy rings and unlocking impregnable safes to uncovering complex blackmail plots (in a version of 'The Adventure of Charles Augustus Milverton', the only Doyle story to be adapted directly), making for an old-fashioned odd-couple detective show that succeeds thanks to its agreeable protagonists and some ingenious storylines (much of the cast and crew worked on the equally well-plotted *Medium*).

Neither as clever nor as beholden to the past as the Moffat-Gatiss *Sherlock*, this reimagining benefits from having the feisty Liu, who proves more than just the great detective's



Elementary It's a pretty loose adaptation of Sherlock Holmes: Jonny Lee Miller's scruffy detective is now based in New York, a tattooed recovering drug addict

Asian sidekick. Among the other updates, Mrs Hudson gets the transgender treatment (played, sadly only once so far, by Candis Cayne) and instead of Lestrade we have Captain Gregson (Aidan Quinn), who at one point is so annoyed by Holmes's antics that he socks him in the stomach. Not all the updates come off as well, though, and having Vinnie Jones as Moriarty's subaltern Moran probably ranks as the worst bit of Sherlockian casting since Roger Moore donned the iconic deerstalker for a 1976 TV movie.

Disc: Impeccably transferred to disc. The 45 minutes of extras include the standard mixture of 'making of' featurettes.

THE TUNNEL

Kudos/Canal+/Shine/Sky; UK/France 2013; Acorn
Media/Region 2 DVD; 508 minutes; Certificate 15;
16:9; Features: cast-and-crew interviews

Reviewed by Sergio Angelini

After *The Killing*, *Homeland* and *The Bridge*, once again we find ourselves presented with a supercop heroine – Clémence Poésy's ultra-direct, seemingly empathy-free Elise Wassermann – with smarts to spare but zero social skills. In fact, this Anglo-French co-production is a remake of *The Bridge* (there is also a Tex-Mex

iteration in the US), and although it positively delights in its heavy-handed use of profanity (and yes, they get the c-word in there) and much gruesomeness, overall it comes across as much softer than its Scandinavian progenitor.

The plot of the original is followed very closely, with two different bodies positioned to overlap two jurisdictions – in this case the British and French forces policing the Channel Tunnel. Stephen Dillane plays the ultra-fertile *rosbif* heading the British investigation who tries to humanise Elise (a process that reminded me a lot of Isaac Asimov's SF-mystery hybrids pairing a jaded human detective with a Candide-like android). The series begins well in *Seven* mode, with the 'Truth Terrorist' killing innocents to pinpoint inadequacies in social care; but it rather boringly jettisons politics halfway through, when it all turns out to be an absurdly convoluted story of personal revenge (the surprise villain proving to be anything but, thanks to the usual tactic of casting a well-known face in a seemingly minor supporting role).

Disc: The anamorphic image and 5.1 audio are rendered impeccably (Charlotte Gainsbourg's delicate susurrations of the title song comes through a treat). Ⓢ

New releases

← relatively little known in Fellini's output. Its neglect is hardly deserved. Following three small-time conmen led by the bull-like (and of course dubbed) Broderick Crawford, the action marches steadily from cruel comedy to final bleak tragedy, scarcely missing a step.

A frenetic New Year's Eve party scene anticipates *La dolce vita* (1960) but this is a more controlled, less self-indulgent offering. Even though the tricksters despicably target the poorest, most naive victims, Fellini still contrives to make them figures of pathos – especially Crawford, haunted by encroaching age and self-contempt. Fellini originally wanted Humphrey Bogart for the lead, noting that he had “the typical face of a conman from Calabria”; Bogart proved to be too ill to take the role, but Fellini found his actor when he saw Crawford's face on a poster for 1949's *All the King's Men*. Despite the actor's personal problems (he was an alcoholic and, according to Fellini's second assistant Dominique Delouche, was blind drunk for much of the shoot) or perhaps even because of them, Crawford's Augusto, petty scam-artist on the slide, is moving in his degradation.

The expressive use of locations – deserted nocturnal piazzas, crumbling farmhouses, bleak windswept mountain roads – shows the director still in close touch with his neorealist roots. His favourite composer, Nino Rota, contributes an ironically jaunty score, mocking the pretensions behind Augusto's bluster (“I've swindled my way round the world... I can sell ice to Eskimos”). Fellini was drawing from life – Delouche recalls how he liked to socialise with dubious types.

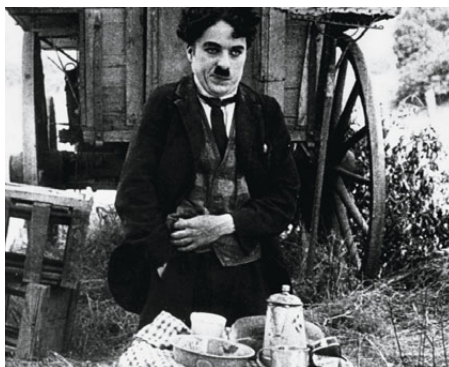
Disc: The sole onscreen extra, apart from a bombastic trailer, is the same interview with Delouche – discursive but engaging – that graced the 2005 BFI release. There's a substantial booklet.

BIG TROUBLE IN LITTLE CHINA

John Carpenter; USA 1986; Arrow Films/Region B Blu-ray and Steelbook Blu-ray; Certificate 15; 100 minutes; 2.35:1; Features: audio commentary with John Carpenter and Kurt Russell, interviews, vintage making-of, extended ending, deleted scenes, original music video, gallery, original trailers, TV spots, essay and interview booklet

Reviewed by Kate Stables

Even the most ardent appreciator of John Carpenter's oeuvre struggles to articulate the appeal of this baggy, exuberant, genre-mashing movie. The antithesis of the lean *Assault on Precinct 13* (1976) or taut genre classics such as *Halloween* (1978) or *The Thing* (1982), this comic action fantasy is a latter-day western packed with kinetic martial-arts spectacle, years before Hollywood discovered Hong Kong cinema. Carpenter admits in the extras interview to being attracted by the over-the-top feel of kung-fu hit *Five Fingers of Death* (1972) and adopting its “goofy sense of freedom”. With the kind of creative control that seems unthinkable nowadays, he and leading man Kurt Russell opted for a jokey, horror-tinged action satire (“The Caucasian guy thinks he's the hero – but he's the sidekick”) in which Russell playfully channels John Wayne. The studio, which had wanted an Indiana Jones-style leading man, forced Carpenter to tack on a hero-lauding prologue, in a failed attempt to normalise the picture. Whether the film's broad, knockabout



Mutual appreciation: Chaplin in *The Vagabond*

approach is ham-fisted or a knowingly subversive take on action-cinema norms and kung-fu tropes is largely in the eye of the beholder – though that doesn't include the film's supra-real caricature of Chinatown and James Hong's Fu Manchu-style villainous wizard, the racial politics of which might be kindly described as problematic...

Disc: A pleasing transfer with punchy reds and vibrant greens, this rerelease comes laden with extensive, nostalgic interviews with all the key players and a plethora of the film's original promotional garnish. A Six Demon Bag, basically.

FILMS BY CHARLES CHAPLIN

LA NAISSANCE DE CHARLOT:

THE MUTUAL COMEDIES 1916-1917

THE FLOORWALKER, THE FIREMAN, THE VAGABOND, ONE A.M., THE COUNT, THE PAWNSHOP, BEHIND THE SCREEN, THE RINK, EASY STREET, THE CURE, THE IMMIGRANT, THE ADVENTURER

USA 1916-17; Arte/Region 2 DVD; 299 minutes;

1.33:1; Features: bonus short ('Little Tich: The Musical Marvel'), documentaries ('Unknown Chaplin', 'Chaplin's Goliath'), booklet

Reviewed by Michael Brooke

The first volume in Arte's *La Naissance de Charlot* series duplicated the BFI and Flicker Alley's *Chaplin at Keystone* collections. The second skips a year, omitting the 1915 Essanay films in favour of Chaplin's Mutual output, the point at which he finally had complete creative freedom and the budgets necessary to realise that freedom. He also by this point had a regular repertory company, of which Scottish-born heavy Eric Campbell was the most significant newcomer. No one before Campbell had established such complementary physical chemistry with Chaplin, and one can well imagine how hard his accidental death in December 1917 must have hit his boss, both personally and creatively.

Not every film here is a masterpiece but the quality threshold is far higher than before, and for every retread (the Keystone-style pile-ups of incompetent public officials in *The Fireman*, the well-established drunk act in *One A.M.*) there's a genuine breakthrough, be it mechanical (*The Floorwalker* is believed to contain the first escalator gags in silent comedy) or narrative (the deft mix of comedy and pathos in *The Vagabond*). In particular, the already iconic tramp has become a far more sophisticated creation, the thuggish brawler of the Keystone years already a distant memory.

Disc: A comparison between these new discs and the BFI's long-in-the-tooth Chaplin Mutual DVDs clearly reveals that the films have undergone significant restoration in recent years, with jump cuts on the BFI discs sometimes filled in, albeit often with unavoidably inferior material. The picture is also appreciably more stable, sharper and cleaner, though thankfully the digital touching-up hasn't attempted artificial fixes of more intractable problems.

So this box is currently a clear first choice, but with two caveats. Firstly, the original 1.33:1 images are 'pillarboxed' into a 16:9 frame, which looks fine on modern screens but produces thick black bars all around the image on older CRT-based non-widescreen sets. Second, although Arte offers a choice of 'piano' and 'orchestral' accompaniment, the latter generally signifies something with more than one instrument, whereas the BFI's Carl Davis scores are the real thing. Generous extras include the first episode of Kevin Brownlow and David Gill's *Unknown Chaplin* (1983) series and Kevin Macdonald's affectionate 1996 tribute to Campbell, *Chaplin's Goliath*. The extensive booklet is the only exclusively French element of an otherwise English-friendly package.

CINERAMA TRAVELOGUES

CINERAMA HOLIDAY

Robert L. Bendick, Philippe De Lacy; USA 1955;

Flicker Alley/Region-free Blu-ray and NTSC DVD

Dual Format; 129 minutes; 2.56:1 'Smilebox' (DVD

anamorphic); Features: documentaries, cast interviews, deleted scenes, 8mm location footage, newsreels, Cinerama breakdown reel, slideshow, booklet

SOUTH SEAS ADVENTURE

Carl Dudley; USA 1958; Flicker Alley/Region-free Blu-

ray and NTSC DVD Dual Format; 128 minutes; 2.56:1

'Smilebox' (DVD anamorphic); Features: commentary (David Coles, Ramine Seaman), short film ('Renault Dauphine'), documentaries, interviews (Carol Dudley Katzka, Saul Cooper), slideshow, trailer, booklet

Reviewed by Michael Brooke

Respectively the second and fifth/last of the original three-strip Cinerama travelogues, *Cinerama Holiday* and *South Seas Adventure* both follow a very similar formula: various people visiting far-flung parts of the world for education, enlightenment and high-speed thrill rides. Since Cinerama and close-ups make for unnatural bedfellows, our guides are generally filmed from a distance, a visual detachment heightened both by the narration, which usually conveys their thoughts in the third person, and the fact that they're mostly played by actors (columnist Art Buchwald being an exception).

But although clearly never intended as psychological studies, these films now offer a look at 1950s dreams and aspirations that's at least as compelling as the unmatchably vivid view the originals gave of the world, at a time when mass tourism was still taking baby steps, and before certain key landmarks had even been built – Sydney Harbour, for example, has a bridge but not an opera house. The tourists depicted in *Cinerama Holiday* are obviously well-heeled, although in *South Seas Adventure* a penniless Frenchman manages to blag a free ride to Tahiti to follow in his idol Paul Gauguin's footsteps,

while immigrants from a “troubled homeland in Central Europe” settle permanently Down Under.

Cinerama Holiday sends Europeans to America (Las Vegas, Arizona, San Francisco, New Orleans, Washington DC, New York City) and Americans to Europe (a disappointingly limited selection of St Moritz, Davos and Paris, although the first-person bobsleigh ride and Grand-Guignol puppet show offset the insularity). *South Seas Adventure* takes us to Hawaii (a year away from joining the US), southern Pacific islands from Tahiti to New Zealand, and finally Australia. Technical advances had by now led to slightly more visual ambition beyond the familiar landscape flyovers – at one point the camera even adopts a pouched baby kangaroo’s viewpoint (albeit briefly, presumably mindful of potential audience nausea) – but there’s no significant tampering with a winning formula.

Disc: Whereas Flicker Alley’s earlier *This Is Cinerama* and *Windjammer* discs were sourced from single-strip reductions, these new transfers came directly from the original camera negatives, and superior digital restoration tools have blurred the joins between the panels to the point where they’re easy to tune out. The results are spectacular, even if they unavoidably lack the originals’ scale.

THE EPIC OF EVEREST

John Noel; UK 1924; BFI/Region B Blu-ray and Region 2 DVD Dual Format; Certificate U; 87 minutes; 1.33:1; Features: ‘Introducing The Epic of Everest’, ‘Scoring The Epic of Everest’, ‘Restoring The Epic of Everest’, alternative score, additional accompanying musical pieces from 1924 Scala screening, PDF download of original 1924 film programme, essay booklet

Reviewed by Kate Stables

Despite George Mallory’s complaint about expedition photography – “This is not Hollywood



Peak viewing: *The Epic of Everest*

and we are not film stars” – it was Captain John Noel’s historic documentary film of the 1924 Everest expedition that played a key role in getting it funded (Noel offered the almost unthinkable sum of £8,000 up front for the cinema and photographic rights) and in making its tragic story well known worldwide. It has been expertly restored by the BFI, who have released it here alongside *The Great White Silence*, Herbert Ponting’s account of Scott’s doomed attempt on the South Pole. (Ponting’s film held such fascination for Noel that he watched it 16 times.)

Technically innovative, with startling long-distance cinematography (Noel customised his own lightweight camera with a powerful telescopic lens and a rubberised eyepiece that wouldn’t ice itself to his face, as Ponting’s had), the film is extraordinarily gripping, if less jauntily heterogeneous than its predecessor. Produced in the same era as Flaherty’s *Nanook of the North* and Hurley’s *Pearls and Savages*, it yokes the ethnographic exoticism of Tibetan life to mountaineering feats and breathtaking

landscapes. The result is a fascinating, sometimes abrasive mix, in which amused condescension towards unwashed Tibetan nomads gives way to awe at the cold purity of Everest. Gradually, a memorialising narrative of tragic heroism emerges from Noel’s footage, with dramatic intertitling musing on “Man’s battle with Nature” between the comparatively long, cloud-swept takes.

The post-WWI mission of national revival identified in explorer Wade Davis’s authoritative booklet essay also looms large in the intertitles: “Such is their birthright, and such is their destiny, to win this battle which is perhaps the most tremendous of all.” Alongside this encomium run Noel’s ravishing hand-tinted images, the pink Himalayas giving way to turquoise glaciers, an ant-like expedition force painstakingly negotiating vast dimpled diagonal sheets of ice and giddy cliffs. Equally atmospheric is Simon Fisher Turner’s melancholy new electronic score, which makes potent use of storm winds and oxygen-breathing samples at the film’s climax, so that the mountain itself seems to respire. The skilful interplay of images and intertitles peaks here too, making the film tense and then poignant in turn, as a six-blanket signal pronounces the summit team lost. So magnificently and so cruelly characterised is Everest throughout that one can see why the *Weekly Dispatch* declared her the film’s leading lady, the victor in “man’s passionate struggle to conquer the dreadful virgin of the snows”.

Disc: A pristine restoration and transfer, whose painstaking progress is tracked in a useful featurette. The essay booklet is excellently detailed but the outstanding feature is Julie Brown’s newly recorded re-creation with the Cambridge University Chamber Orchestra of the original 1924 score. A lively, part-composed, part-borrowed musical patchwork (hearty portions of Borodin and Fourdrain), it alters the film’s narrative effect in intriguing ways.

EYES WITHOUT A FACE

Georges Franju; France 1960; Criterion/Region A Blu-ray/Region 1 NTSC DVD; 90 minutes; 1.66:1 (DVD anamorphic); Features: short film (‘Le Sang des bêtes’), interviews (Franju, Edith Scob, Pierre Boileau, Thomas Narcejac), booklet

Reviewed by Michael Brooke

What an extraordinary year 1960 was for horror cinema. Just a few weeks separated the premieres of *Eyes Without a Face* (2 March), *Peeping Tom* (16 May), *Psycho* (16 June), *The Fall of the House of Usher* (22 June) and *Black Sunday* (11 August), genre milestones all. But Georges Franju’s film remains perhaps the most disturbing, not just for its anticipation of Cronenbergian ‘body horror’ but also for its unnerving potency, something the subsequent achievement of actual face transplants (in France, no less!) has done nothing to diminish.

When producer Jules Borkon expressed concern that a theme involving a mad doctor might run into difficulties in the German marketplace a mere 14 years after the end of WWII, Franju explained that Pierre Brasseur’s Dr Génessier is not remotely mad: rather, his natural love for his daughter Christiane (Edith Scob) and understandable guilt over the



Big Trouble in Little China This baggy, exuberant, genre-mashing movie is a latter-day western packed with kinetic martial-arts spectacle

Lost and found

DREAMCHILD

OVERLOOKED FILMS CURRENTLY UNAVAILABLE ON UK DVD OR BLU-RAY

Gavin Millar's film, written by Dennis Potter, offers an entrancing look at Lewis Carroll through the eyes of the elderly Alice

by Philip Horne

Beginning an interview with Gavin Millar about his entrancing, sinister, at last miraculously moving feature debut *Dreamchild*, scripted by Dennis Potter, Simon Banner in *The Times* sounded an elegiac note, even as the movie awaited its UK release in January 1986: "The British film industry, that most fragile of creatures, seems once more to be slipping into decline." Goldcrest had just flopped with the expensive *Revolution* (1985), and *Dreamchild*'s dominant producer Verity Lambert (original producer of *Doctor Who*) had resigned in July 1985 as head of production at Thorn EMI Screen Entertainment – which had then ceased in-house production. In a sense, the film, despite a £2.9m budget – high for a British project – was something of an orphan even before it appeared (its US distributors, Universal Studios, gave it a limited release in the US in October 1985).

Millar, then 47, a former student of Thorold Dickinson's at the Slade, had won the Prix Italia for his TV film of Potter's *Cream in My Coffee* in 1980, after running and presenting *Arena Cinema* on BBC2 from 1976 to 1980 (interviewing Tati, Renoir, Fellini, Truffaut and Powell and Pressburger, among others). He told Banner that he'd been attracted by the "weird originality" of Potter's script about the aged Alice Liddell, inspiration for Lewis Carroll's 1865 *Alice's Adventures in Wonderland*. "And I liked it because of its tenderness and its complex range of emotions and motives, its ambiguities." Potter had written *Alice*, about the Reverend Charles Dodgson and his fixation on the prepubescent Alice Liddell, for TV in 1965 – but was stimulated by a fresh discovery, as he told Graham Fuller in 1993 for *Potter on Potter*: "I read a paragraph somewhere – I don't know where – which said that Alice Liddell went to New York when she was in her eighties. I said, 'Jesus Christ'. A couple of days later I was writing it..." He wrote *Dreamchild*, he said, "in four and a half days". Maybe he recalled Dodgson's sad prediction – foreseeing that, as Alice grew up, "No thought of me shall find a place, in thy young life hereafter" – and imagined her thoughts of him in her old life.

The film joins the almost 80-year-old Alice (majestically yet vulnerably played by Coral Browne), now a stiff, grand, very proper widow insisting on being addressed only as 'Mrs Hargreaves', on the steamship carrying her to America for the first time, accompanied by her shy young companion Lucy (Nicola Cowper). The occasion is the centenary of Dodgson's birth, being spectacularly celebrated at Columbia University with 'Alice' as the guest of honour.



Amelia Shankley as young Alice, with Tenniel's characters as recreated by Jim Henson's Creature Shop

Sweet or sentimental as the conception might sound, it's given a very tough and painful edge by its troubled tone

As Potter put it, he was stirred up by "the idea of that tied-in, repressed, strange, playful, tormented yet joyously inventive man, and an old woman thinking back because of the culture shock of arriving in New York at that time".

The film only partly occupies its 1932 present, where the script revels in the confrontation between this ultra-respectable embodiment of English repressiveness and a pastiche-version of the snappy, cynical, golden-age-Hollywood newspaper movie, as the press pack besieges the confused dowager with cheeky intrusions

in the mode of *The Front Page*. When sacked newshound Jack Dolan (Peter Gallagher) insinuates himself into her company, showing how the publicity can be made to pay in dollars, he also (not very plausibly) falls for Lucy in a way that awakens in her employer memories hitherto dismissed as "things best not gone into".

Dodgson himself (Ian Holm, in the film's second great performance) is also vividly, ambiguously there – in the old woman's inner world, at the film's core. Millar wrote in the production notes that "I liked the idea of the fantasy and reality, and never quite knowing where one ended and the other began, which gives weight to the place of nightmare and dream in people's lives." In Alice's hallucinations, the Mad Hatter, March Hare and others drawn from Walter Tenniel's illustrations, as realised by Jim Henson's Creature Shop, become harsh, sinister beings – in Millar's 1986 phrase "as fierce as we felt an old lady's nightmares would have made them".

Sweet or sentimental as the conception might sound, it's given a very tough and painful edge by its troubled tone and by the tensions the aged woman rediscovers as she thinks back – to the pathos of Dodgson's intense, controlled adoration of her young self, that impossible object of desire. For the film steers a delicate course – aided by Stanley Myers's sensitive, atmospheric score and Billy Williams's lustrous yet shadowed cinematography – through territory thick with taboos. Potter himself had been sexually abused as a child – yet, as Millar told me recently, all concerned agreed that *Dreamchild* "wasn't a film about a paedophile, it was a film about a man who was bursting with love for an object – and a series of objects, because he always loved little prepubertal girls – but never had any practical approach to them, because he couldn't." Here, where 'Victorian repression' and religious

WHAT THE PAPERS SAID



'Dodgson becomes the latest in Potter's many studies of sublimation and displacement... It relates not only to his earlier exploration of childhood, *Blue Remembered Hills*, but also to his consistent

interest in psychological and moral ambiguity, in characters who refuse to fit into convenient moral and dramatic categories... A superb performance from Coral Browne. Mrs. Hargreaves is even more ambiguous than Dodgson, and the role is quite unsentimentalised'

Julian Petley 'Monthly Film Bulletin', Jan 1986

New releases



circumstances of her disfigurement have overwhelmed conventional notions of morality when it comes to sourcing appropriate material with which to reconstruct her face. And it's this chilling rationality that underpins the entire film: at a time when censorship usually necessitated a euphemistic approach towards this kind of material, Franju never blinks, and if his film is less viscerally confrontational than his 1949 debut short, the poeticised slaughterhouse documentary *Le Sang des bêtes* (included here in a beautiful high-definition transfer that finally brings Franju's fixation on texture and tactility to the video medium), that's scant comfort.

Edith Scob has done some fine work since (most recently in 2012's *Holy Motors*, which explicitly alludes to this film) but nothing else in her filmography quite matches her inscrutably blank-faced wanderings through her father's mansion, which still rank among horror cinema's most indelibly haunting images. So haunting, in fact, that despite Franju's claim that the film only offers "horror in homeopathic doses", its abrupt lurches into more graphic material (surgery, dogs) still come as a shock even on the umpteenth viewing.

Disc: Sourced from the recent Gaumont restoration, this beautiful high-definition transfer makes the most of Eugen Schüfftan's velvety cinematography. The archive interviews with Franju are a joy, a particular highlight being his lipsmacking description of the reaction to a documentary called *Trepagnation for Epileptic Seizures*, with the audience sounding considerably more pained than the thoroughly anaesthetised subjects. Two trailers, made in France (arty) and the US (schlocky) respectively, offer a fascinating mini-masterclass in contrasting marketing techniques.

THE OTHER

Robert Mulligan; USA 1972; Twilight Time/Region Free Bluray; 100 minutes; 1.85:1; Features: isolated score track, trailer

Reviewed by Nick Pinkerton

As terms like 'overrated' and 'underrated' have been effectively denuded of all meaning, I'll cut to the chase and tell you that Robert Mulligan was a fantastic all-around filmmaker and if you're not familiar with his work you're doing yourself a disservice.

In *The Other*, as in his best-known films *To Kill a Mockingbird* (1962) and *Summer of '42* (1971), Mulligan gets wonderful performances from children, including twins Chris and Martin Udvarnoky in their only screen appearance. Mulligan understood the importance of the throwaway detail in establishing tone – a gift that, as here, was most often exercised in period and rural settings, despite the fact that he himself was a son of the Bronx. Finally, Mulligan has a profound understanding of light and shadow as the basic elements of film grammar, capable of wordlessly broadcasting complex internal states; working with DP Robert Surtees on *The Other*, he created a number of distinctly atmospheric environments: a carnival freak show, a parlour laid out for a wake at midnight, a cellar decorated with the fuzz of bulrushes.

The Other was based on a 1971 bestseller adapted by its writer Tom Tryon, the star of *The*



It's a wrap: *Eyes Without a Face*

Cardinal (1963), who was effectively berated out of acting by Otto Preminger. (Tryon was also unhappy with Mulligan's directing here, which makes one suspect that he might've been an altogether impossible guy.) The scene is a family farm somewhere in Depression-era America. Legendary actress Uta Hagen, making her feature debut, is the family's Russian-born matriarch, Diana Muldaur her invalided adult daughter, and the Udvarnokys her 11-year-old boys, fatherless and running wild through sun-kissed fields. There is one good son, one bad son, and a terrific twist that I will not reveal – though it's not even the emotional climax of the movie and *The Other* loses nothing from re-viewing once its secret is known. Unlike William Friedkin in the following year's *The Exorcist*, Mulligan depends minimally on brute force for shock effect but his film is harrowing nonetheless, the implications of its horror far more unsettling. For there's no external 'other' in *The Other*. Evil begins at home, and it comes from within.

Disc: Jerry Goldsmith's score, cut during postproduction, is available on an isolated track.

PERESTROIKA/PERESTROIKA RECONSTRUCTED

Sarah Turner; UK 2009/13; Lux/Region B Blu-ray and Region 0 DVD Dual Format; 118/178 minutes; Features: booklet

Reviewed by Kim Knowles

When *Perestroika* was released in 2010, critics drew parallels with the work of Jarman, Tarkovsky, Resnais and Chris Marker in an attempt to pin down the film's multiple reference points. Film poem, cinematic essay, road movie, experimental narrative, psychodrama – *Perestroika* is each and all of these things; yet, like the relentless movement of the train on and around which Sarah Turner's story is based, or the memory of a time past that it attempts to trace, it is a film in flux, continually shifting between moods and modes.

Suffering from retrograde amnesia following a cycling accident, the simultaneously real and fictional character Sarah Turner retraces a journey made 20 years ago on the Trans-Siberian railway. The physical journey, which we see (and feel) almost exclusively from the window of the train, is also narrated as a psychic one, a process of coming to terms with the loss of the best friend who accompanied Turner on the original trip and who, shortly after, died tragically. Footage from this original



probity mean restraining sexual urges towards children, we can't simply take the patronising line of scorning these formalities as hypocritical. The young Alice (Amelia Shankley) senses her hold over Dodgson – and the old Alice finally, overwhelmingly, recalls moments when she cruelly mocked him. Her speech at the Columbia celebration, acknowledging the "gift" and the "love" she only now fully sees, is deeply moving – largely because Browne magnificently refuses to sentimentalise. As Millar says, "Coral was hard as nails but full of feeling."

Though unsupported by its distributors, the film was understood and praised by critics in London and New York – most strikingly by Andrew Sarris. His remarkable appreciation in the *Village Voice*, headed 'The Film That Got Away', came six months after *Dreamchild*'s New York release. After a long, self-castigating confession that "I kept meaning to see it but there was always something else more hyped up," he declared it "should be near the top of my ten best list at year's end". In fact, his review stirringly recreates the film's own delicately rendered combination of remorse and gratitude, its belated recognition of a gift: "What makes the film so rousing and inspiring is its invocation of love and art as redemptive forces pitted against the dark spirits." *Dreamchild* "gets infinitely better as it goes along, rising inexorably towards a rich epiphany" and resisting "facile irony", he wrote. "It is so long since a thoroughly intelligent movie has celebrated greatness of spirit with unmitigated admiration."

Tantalisingly, Millar told me, the film as released was "about ten minutes shorter than my cut". He didn't know if the material from that director's cut survived but – "God, my memory's being stirred now!" – there were scenes of Dodgson as a kindly uncle having harmless fun with the girls, more scenes of him photographing girls, a scene where he has built for Alice a doll's house large enough for her to get inside. The cuts weren't his idea: "Verity chopped a lot of stuff out." And, "The worst thing she did: she never wanted the dean, Alice's father, to be Nigel Hawthorne. You probably don't even know that there was such a character... He had a substantial part in the script." Lambert had opposed Hawthorne's casting. "Every scene with Nigel in it, she was down on it like a ton of bricks. That's frightful! What's he doing? And she gradually cut him out and out and out of every scene." In the end, "I said, 'Well, I'd rather have him not there at all than insult him by putting him in, holding the scenery up.' She said, 'All right.' So he was cut out."

Millar is still bitter – but characteristically wry and generous: "Anyway, worse things happened to Orson Welles... I give her this, that if it hadn't been for Verity, there wouldn't have been a film. She really fought for it, I'll give her that." Maybe the missing material can be found – but even if it can't, *Dreamchild* remains a film worth fighting for.

New releases

➔ journey is woven into the present-day imagery, haunting the film as ghostly visual and aural memory fragments.

Perestroika Reconstructed extends and reframes the original film through an additional hour-long sequence. Images and sounds are repeated but the accompanying voiceover now narrates a different journey: a disastrous and darkly comic road trip from London to Cornwall on the eve of 1990, this time from the perspective of Turner's partner. It is here that the skilful versatility and Möbius-strip complexity of Turner's writing reveal themselves, as doublings, repetitions and re-enactments extend into the viewing experience, implicating the spectator in the act of remembering.

Disc: The booklet includes essays by Elizabeth Cowie, Sophie Mayer and Paul Newland.

THE STUART HALL PROJECT

John Akomfrah; UK 2013; BFI/Region 2 DVD; 103 minutes; 1.78:1; Features: video Q&A with John Akomfrah and Baroness Lola Young, audio Q&A with Akomfrah, Parminder Vir and Stuart Hall, director interview, booklet

Reviewed by Sam Davies

Identity, says Stuart Hall in this film, is not a fixed, finalised quantity – it is an “endless, ongoing conversation with those around you”. And *The Stuart Hall Project*, John Akomfrah's film about the cultural theorist's life and work, has itself the sense of being a series of open-ended, ongoing conversations. Like Akomfrah's 2010 documentary *The Nine Muses*, it is an archival collage constructed, an onscreen caption informs us, “entirely” from Hall's own collections. Snippets of Hall on TV and radio are woven together with contemporary newsreel footage to tell the story of a mixed-race Jamaican Rhodes scholar arriving in 1950s Oxford and staying on, co-founding the *New Left Review*, pioneering the field of cultural studies and becoming one of the foremost voices in Britain on issues of race, empire, culture, identity, politics and their many points of intersection and tension.

Akomfrah's collage technique means that there is no central narrating voice or present-day interview material with Hall to guide the viewer. The clips of Hall are allowed to jostle each other and to be incomplete or elliptical. But this only reinforces the idea of unfinished, ongoing conversations, so that apparent loose ends invite you to follow them beyond the scope of the film. One wonderful through-line is provided by the soundtrack, drawn mostly from the music of Miles Davis, the musician who, Hall said, put “his finger on my soul”. As Ashley Clark's booklet essay notes, the way that Davis's chronology counterpoints the film's events has brilliant effects, such as when a murky pastoral passage from *In a Silent Way* eddies underneath a tempest of images of 1968's political upheavals.

Above all *The Stuart Hall Project* captures Hall's extraordinary charisma – and if anything throws it into sharper relief, given some of the details it reveals about his turbulent family background. When Hall speaks of his sister's troubled life (forbidden to marry a black doctor, treated with ECT after a subsequent breakdown) or the profound discomfort within his family over his own darker skin-tone (a key social marker for his mother), the wry, calm yet steely



Body politics: *The Year of the Cannibals*

confidence with which he went on to do his life's work seems all the more impressive.

Disc: There are two revealing interviews, one in which Akomfrah discusses his film's genesis in his earlier video installation *The Unfinished Conversation*. Most interesting of all is the public Q&A with Hall himself. Since *The Stuart Hall Project* is based overwhelmingly on archive footage, it has at times a valedictory feel, as if for a subject from the past: it feels entirely necessary to also hear Hall *viva voce* in the present day.

LA VIE DE BOHEME

Aki Kaurismäki; Finland 1992; Criterion/Region A Blu-ray and Region 1 DVD Dual Format; 103 minutes; 1.85:1; Features: essay, interview with actor André Wilms, documentary

Reviewed by Michael Atkinson

Aki Kaurismäki's distinctively bittersweet dyspepsia – a kind of vodka-weary Bresson-meets-Tati – arguably peaked with this semi-self-satiric adaptation of Henri Murger's famous stories.

Gritty and cheap, though carefully composed and timed for priceless deadpan reverberation, *La Vie de Bohème* is stationed in a Paris somewhere between Murger's 1840 free-for-all and the 90s commercialised metropolis, and even the three penniless protagonists (a composer, a painter and a playwright) are themselves anachronisms, scheming for wine money and submitting to their respective, much absent, muses. The walrus-like painter Rodolfo (played by Kaurismäki staple Matti Pellonpää), seedy writer Marcel (André Wilms) and ape-like avant-garde composer Schaunard (another Finnish vet, Kari Väänänen) together epitomise both the 19th-century art hobo and Kaurismäki's modern schmuck, as they labour at their dismal crafts, live meal to meal and pursue various kerbside romances. It's Rodolfo's on-again-off-again liaison with an aimless middle-aged waif named Mimi (Evelyn Didi) that becomes the centre of the story, as Rodolfo is deported (to Albania, no less) and Mimi succumbs to an unnamed, theatrically fatal disease.

Murger's dry humour – having unwashed bums converse like the reincarnations of Balzac – and half-sincere melodrama are all grist for Kaurismäki's postmodern mill, built of pregnant pauses, unresponsive acting, stark compositions and shadowy *mise en scène*. (In his original press notes, he talks of a “diabolical plan” to make such a crummy, subversive film that the viewing public will be outraged: “The most enthusiastic – the most angry – of the altogether 40 viewers will seek out the original work and recognise its genius, new editions will

be printed, Murger's name will be on everybody's lips, Mimi will live again...”). As expert in dry comic timing as Keaton, Kaurismäki is a cunning intelligence whose shtick has always interrogated the empathic rhythms of movie-watching; all the same, nothing is predetermined, and while watching *Bohème* you may guffaw when no one else on earth would, and vice versa.

Disc: Graced with a bang-up essay by Luc Sante and an amusingly low-energy Finnish making-of featurette.

THE YEAR OF THE CANNIBALS

Liliana Cavani; Italy 1969; Rarovideo/Region

A Blu-ray; 87 minutes; 2.35:1; Features: new interview with Cavani, trailer, booklet essays

Reviewed by Michael Atkinson

A blistering political film perfumed with the pungent haze of dated hipness, this long-overlooked landmark of counterculture absurdism exudes daring and uncompromising resolve even by late 60s standards, and is in many ways the textual contemporary of Godard's *Weekend* and Bertolucci's *Partner*.

It's set in a barebones dystopian hell, a damp Milan ruled by an unseen totalitarianism. A recent revolution has left corpses littered all over the city. The sprawled cadavers lie across stairwells, on the floors of subway carriages, in the middle of highways, and everybody just navigates around them, carrying on with their business while ubiquitous street posters declare that anyone who touches the bodies will be sentenced to death themselves. Clearly, the imagery is high-octane metaphoric; the dead don't show any marks of violence – they're just placeholders, signs of universal injustice. Cavani and co-writer Italo Moscati were adapting Sophocles's *Antigone* but they extrapolated the tragic Theban story on to the entirety of modern society.

As Britt Ekland's defiant Everygirl ventures out with the help of Pierre Clémenti's wild-child misfit to bury her brother's body and then others as well, every iconic fascist paradigm from the mid-century is evoked, including right-wing TV commentary. When Ekland and Clémenti run naked through the streets chased by storm-troopers and police dogs, everything from Treblinka to Vietnam is summoned to mind. Ekland is eventually captured and tortured, in an interrogation scene that resonantly suggests gang-rape, and subsequently Clémenti's search for her body through piles of neglected dead explicitly indexes the struggles of too many people in too many corners of the globe, from Katyn to Cambodia. Practically every inventive beat of the film's imagery radiates outrage.

Luridly potent though it is, Cavani's film can also be fabulously silly – Ennio Morricone's score is hippie-dippy to a hilarious degree, and Ekland's crystalline beauty (as well as her overprimed mane of red hair) is distracting. Despite a slot in the epochal line-up at the 1970 New York Film Festival, Cavani's movie was almost universally despised. Today, as an artefact of the post-war era's rebel zeitgeist, the movie is a bewitching piece of history, and far bolder than any pop dystopias of the past four decades.

Disc: Superb transfer, with a sharp essay by scholar Bruno Di Marino. 🍿

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A new history of British television viewing habits suggests that, persistent myths aside, we really don't know much about why we watch what we do

UNKNOWN PLEASURES

ARMCHAIR NATION

An Intimate History of Britain in Front of the TV

By Joe Moran, Profile Books, 352pp, £16.99, ISBN 9781846683916

Reviewed by John Wyver

On the night of Saturday 23 October 1976, British television achieved what for Joe Moran was an apotheosis. The BBC1 schedule for that evening began with the classified football results at the tail end of *Grandstand* and thundered through *The Basil Brush Show*, *Doctor Who* (Tom Baker vintage), *The Generation Game* and *The Two Ronnies* before *Parkinson* sent an audience of 10 million to bed after encountering guests Glenda Jackson and Desmond Morris. Here, Moran asserts, is “the golden age condensed into a single evening’s television”. Here was “the armchair nation united on BBC1”.

Well, up to a point, as the author is quick to acknowledge, for the nation has never been united in its allegiance to primetime entertainment. Only a few weeks later, the Sex Pistols supposedly outraged the nation with an appearance on Thames TV’s *Today* programme. In fact, only in the London area was Steve Jones heard saying “what a fucking rotter”, and the tabloids did much to whip up the supposed storm of protest. For Leytonstone’s 16-year-old Jonathan Ross: “It was like someone had jumped into the television from the real world and shouted out to me to wake up and start living.”

Moran’s engaging cultural history of British television illuminates many of the medium’s main moments with an acute witness statement. Christopher Hitchens, studying at Balliol College, Oxford, in 1969 watched Neil Armstrong’s moon walk just before 4am on 21 July and went outside to stare up wonderingly into the heavens. “Who could forbear to cheer?” he wrote later. “Still, the experience was poisoned

for me by having to watch Richard Nixon as he babbled to the lunar-nauts by some closed-circuit link.” Sixteen years before, Joan Bakewell ignored BBC coverage of the coronation being relayed on the newly acquired television set at Cambridge’s Newnham College. She noted later that she had not even acknowledged the events of the day in her diary: “So much for all the fanciful talk about the new Elizabethans.”

Armchair Nation challenges a number of persistent television myths, including the idea of the coronation as a watershed for television and the nation. Rather, the book suggests, the coming of mass television was a process that stretched through the 1950s, and for some at least the FA Cup Final weeks before the coronation – the first live football match to reach a mass audience – was the more thrilling event.

Moran also corrects the widespread belief that Kenneth Tynan, on the show *BBC-3* on 13 November 1965, was the first person to use the word ‘fuck’ on British telly. Among those who had

previously used the expletive before the cameras were playwright Brendan Behan in a drunken interview with Malcolm Muggeridge in 1956 (few understood his slurring) and a man who painted railings alongside the River Lagan in Belfast. Asked on Ulster TV's live teatime show in 1959 what it was like painting the same railings all year round, the man replied, "It's fucking boring." Seemingly, not a single viewer complained.

Armchair Nation is long on such anecdotes and a little light on analysis, despite name-checking Baudrillard, Bauman, Bergson, Blanchot et al. What it does well is draw together and dance with panache through multiple histories. There is a history of popular programming, from *Picture Page* via 1967's live outside broadcast of the climbing of Orkney's Old Man of Hoy to *The X Factor* ("a grotesque caricature of democracy"). There is a chronicle too of critical reactions to such programmes, especially from the pages of *The Listener*, from the wonderful Grace Wyndham Goldie in the late 1930s to her successors Dennis Potter, Clive James and Raymond Williams.

There is a top-level history of television technology, which includes John Logie Baird demonstrating his apparatus at Selfridges in 1925, the construction of the great TV masts of the 1950s, the first slow-motion action replay in a 1966 World Cup football match, the coming of colour and the recent analogue switch-off. Changing attitudes to what the BBC now calls "the

The book challenges a number of persistent myths, including the idea of the coronation as a watershed for TV and the nation

nations and regions" are succinctly delineated, with a focus on the rise and fall of the ITV regions and the ways in which Wales, Scotland and Northern Ireland have been included and excluded by the overarching armchair nation. And there is a parade of the ways in which the television audience has been constructed over the years by government ministers, market researchers, schedulers and academics.

The central history of the book, however, remains tantalisingly out of reach. Moran wants to access the television audience's *mentalité* across the years. In his efforts to do so he consults Mass Observation diaries, 'Letters to the Editor', sociological studies, showbusiness biographies and complaints in broadcasters' duty logs. But the evidence for how and why we watched television is slim and frustratingly fragmentary. The final pages of the book see Moran wandering the streets a few days after the Crystal Palace transmitter has switched over to digital. Without even trying to look in, he says he could not help noticing the high-definition screens displaying the half-century-old series *Coronation Street* in the terraced houses named Coronation Villas. "The television screens may be huge," he reflects, "but the people watching them remain as inscrutable as ever. We still know remarkably little about this *terra incognita*, the living room with the TV on." ❧

GLOBAL MEXICAN CINEMA

Its Golden Age

Edited by Robert McKee Irwin and Maricruz Castro Ricalde, BFI/Palgrave Macmillan. 240pp. £60 hardback ISBN 9781844575329/£22.99 paperback ISBN 9781844575336

Reviewed by Paul Julian Smith

The premise of this excellent book may prove surprising to English speakers, who, unversed in differences between Spanish-speaking countries, tend to lump them all together. Yet as the authors argue in their introduction, during its so-called golden age in the 1940s and 50s, Mexican cinema was for diverse Latin American countries the nearest audiences had to their 'own' movies. Its long-term impact is studied here in seven markets: Cuba, Colombia, Venezuela, Argentina, the USA, Spain and (an entertaining outlier) Yugoslavia.

In an era when Mexico City was giving Hollywood a run for its money, audiences across the continent were enthralled by cowboys and showgirls, ballads and monuments, landscapes and history. Although such dominance created some ambivalence, still four Mexican genres defined tastes and provided models for other national cinemas: the folkloric musical, urban melodrama, cabaret movie and nationalist drama. And this cinematic superiority had linguistic effects in the Spanish-speaking world too. Castilian and Argentine accents were relegated to regionalism (even today the so-called 'neutral' Spanish of the *telenovela* is Mexican). Golden age film earned critical acclaim but its mass appeal, according to the authors, derived from its rivalry with Hollywood. Local divas were as glamorously dressed as any north of the border, even if they were not quite as brazen.

One aspect of Mexican cinema's influence was that foreign stars who emigrated to the country were able to represent their own cultures to a large international audience. Hugely successful co-productions included such apparently unlikely titles as 1949's *Jalisco canta en Sevilla* (to get a sense of the culture clash here, imagine 'Nashville sings in Liverpool'). If such Mexican



María Candelaria: winner of the 1946 *Palme d'Or*

incursions into foreign markets were a cultural 'imposition' (a repeated term in this book), the industry pulled no punches at home. *Out on the Big Ranch* (*Allá en el rancho grande*, 1936), set in hyper-nationalistic Jalisco, was the first smash throughout Latin America, later crossing the Atlantic to Spain. The next decade was one of super-productions. *Doña Bárbara* (1943) was based on a Venezuelan novel and starred Mexican superstar María Félix. Director Emilio Fernández brought Dolores del Río back from Hollywood for *Flor silvestre*, which was shot by Gabriel Figueroa. The same team's *María Candelaria* won the top prize at Cannes in 1946.

In the 1950s *Los olvidados*, made by Spanish exile Buñuel, had little influence in Mexico itself, even as popular Mexican stars made inroads in France and Italy.

By the 1960s Mexican movies were in decline, scorned by elite critics as *churros* ('fritters'). Carlos Monsiváis, a public intellectual, was an exception here, viewing Mexican cinema as a kind of audiovisual school, training rural migrants in the alien ways of urban life. In a similar way the authors use meticulous archival research to reconstruct the popular reception of Mexican films abroad.

The national case studies here are lively and varied. Where Cuba was concerned, as one of their largest markets, Mexican moviemakers incorporated Cuban cultural elements and employed professionals from the island. In Colombia, they hawked *Simón Bolívar* (1942), a historical epic on the local liberator. In Venezuela, they persuaded novelist Rómulo Gallegos to cede his works for Mexican adaptations. Argentine star Libertad Lamarque, exiled after a dispute with Eva Perón, was offered vehicles in Mexico. During World War II, the US's good-neighbour policy aided distribution from cosmopolitan New York to Latino Los Angeles, which functioned essentially as part of Mexico's domestic market. Spain, isolated during Franco's dictatorship, experienced a reversal of its colonial legacy. *Enamorada* (1947), shot and set in Mexico, was declared of Spanish national interest. The last and most beguiling chapter explores 1950s Yugoslavia. A Mexican film that was unsung at home – Emilio Fernández's *Un día de vida* (1950) – proved to have a lasting and puzzling impact. So-called Yu-Mex music, Slavic versions of *rancheras*, remains popular to this day.

Perhaps there is a moral here for today. In its golden age, Mexican production adroitly adapted itself to popular tastes across Latin America. While there is now no single continental market, Mexican cinema and television still impose themselves on foreign territories. Austere auteurs (Reygadas, Escalante) win prizes at Cannes. Middle-brow filmmakers (González Iñárritu, del Toro, Cuarón) shoot in Europe. Lowbrow comedians such as Eugenio Derbez break into the US top ten grosses. Meanwhile Univision, the US Spanish-language TV network affiliated with Mexican behemoth Televisa, regularly trounces the English-speaking networks. It may be, then, that the Mexican audiovisual sector is heading for a second golden age as rich as the one so engagingly explored here. ❧

NOSFERATU

By Kevin Jackson, BFI/Palgrave Macmillan, BFI Film Classics, 126pp, £10.99, ISBN 9781844576500

Reviewed by Brad Stevens

FW. Murnau's *Nosferatu – Eine Symphonie des Grauens* (1922) has long existed at the centre of a complex nexus of arguments and concerns: legal (the film was an unauthorised adaptation of Bram Stoker's *Dracula*), aesthetic (it has been related to expressionism, romanticism and surrealism) and historical (Siegfried Kracauer saw its monster as one of those tyrant figures in Weimar cinema who anticipated Hitler). The vampiric Count Orlok (Max Schreck) is himself less a fully realised protagonist/antagonist than a cinematic effect. Frequently lost in a web of images and ideas (landscapes, animals, occult references), he can be virtually anything, transgress any boundary: he is solid and transparent, body and shadow, human and animal, Count and coachman, here and there. All of which perhaps accounts for the curiously unsatisfactory nature of his apparent destruction: at the moment of death, he merely becomes transparent, something we have already seen him do when passing through a closed door. Even the film's production history is difficult to pin down, haunted as it is by myths both frivolous (Schreck really was a vampire) and plausible (the film's producer and production designer Albin Grau may have shot documentary footage



He's behind you: Count Orlok gets everywhere

of Aleister Crowley's trip to Germany).

The master ambiguity might be the one involving Murnau's sexuality. Does this illegal literary adaptation focused on heterosexual relations contain a shadow text in which its creator's illegal homosexuality can be expressed? Murnau, a gentleman from a rich background who entered the then-lowly field of filmmaking and eventually made the leap from Germany to America, seems as transgressive a figure as Count Orlok, the immense sadness which attends this character surely having its

foundation in forbidden desires. As Murnau wrote towards the end of his life: "I am at home in no house and in no country." Orlok could hardly have said it better himself.

The difficulty of making *Nosferatu* conform to any single reading or interpretation may explain why it has taken the BFI's Film Classics series so long to get around to this seminal work, a delay all the more curious in that S.S. Prawer's book on Werner Herzog's 1979 remake, *Nosferatu Phantom der Nacht*, appeared almost a decade ago. Kevin Jackson's splendid monograph proves well worth the wait, methodically making its way through various issues that precede, surround and succeed the text without ever losing sight of the film itself. Stories familiar to Murnau specialists are told concisely, much of the information here being new to me. Jackson is especially good on the film's relationship to its source novel: as he points out, the idea of sunlight being fatal to vampires was an invention not of Stoker but of Murnau and his screenwriter, Henrik Galeen.

The most fascinating section is the one dedicated to Germany's occultist movement, to which several of *Nosferatu*'s creators (including, perhaps, Murnau himself) belonged: as Jackson notes, the film, almost uniquely, was "the product both of an industry and of a subculture". The key figure here is Albin Grau, who initiated the project for his production company Prana-Film. Grau was thought to have perished in a concentration camp, though, as Jackson reveals, he actually moved back to Germany after the war and died in 1971. The supernatural, unreliable information, an evocation of the fascist nightmare and an anticlimactic demise: it's *Nosferatu* in a nutshell. **S**

FIRST FILMS OF THE HOLOCAUST

Soviet Cinema and the Genocide of the Jews, 1938-1946

By Jeremy Hicks, University of Pittsburgh Press, 300pp, \$28.95, ISBN 9780822962243

Reviewed by Sue Vice

The events of the Holocaust in the Soviet Union have become more widely known in the West following the end of the Cold War and the opening up of Russian state archives. However, as Jeremy Hicks argues in this fascinating study, our mental geography of the Nazis' wartime genocide still tends to centre elsewhere: on the industrial-scale gassing in the death camps, most particularly Auschwitz, and on the imagery of their liberation at the war's end. It is the film footage from Bergen-Belsen of emaciated bodies being bulldozed into mass graves that is most likely to haunt British memories. But there exists a different national viewpoint on these events that is a crucial complement to the more familiar one.

Russian films representing the Holocaust were released as early as 1941, when the Nazi invasion of the Soviet Union turned anti-semitic violence into genocidal murder. For the most part, these murders took the form of mass shootings, or gassing in specially adapted vans. As Hicks argues, contemporary Soviet films that depict such events do so almost inadvertently, and did not conceive of themselves as filming the Holocaust, an event that was, after all, not yet known as such. Hicks

claims convincingly that the eloquence and value of such footage lies precisely in its silences and suppressions. Film footage was edited to give it the broadest possible appeal, so that, for instance, in the outtakes for a newsreel about atrocities in the Ukrainian town of Barvenkovo in 1942, the body of a recently shot woman appears with her Star of David armband clearly visible – yet in the newsreel's final version, the imagery has been edited so that this "unambiguous visual marker" of her Jewish identity can no longer be seen.

While some fiction films, such as Mark Donskoi's *Unvanquished* (1945), did depict Jewish persecution, documentaries tended not to; nor did they acknowledge the fact that Jews

Our mental geography of the Nazis' wartime genocide still tends to centre on places other than the Soviet Union

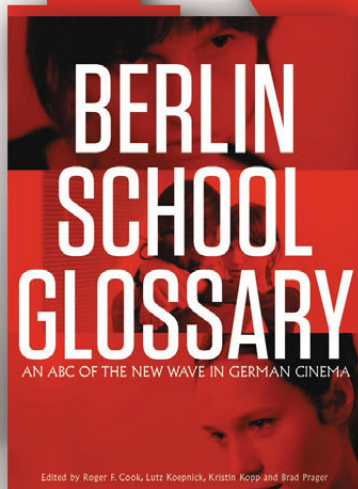


Unvanquished (1945): depicts anti-semitism

constituted the majority of those killed in the massacres on which they focused. As Hicks maintains, this is due to a complex ideological project of 'Sovietising' the Holocaust. It entailed subsuming Jewish deaths into a narrative of resistance and righteous war rather than acknowledging the particularity of genocide. Thus, while the destruction of the University of Kharkov and the death of one of its professors, Aleksandr Mikhailovich Efros, is lamented on film as evidence of the Nazi hatred for Ukrainian culture, Efros's Jewish identity, the true reason for his death, goes unmentioned.

These Soviet films were largely ignored in the West on their release. They were dismissed as pro-communist propaganda along the lines of Irina Setkina's 1943 film *Tragedy in the Katyn Wood*, which supported attempts to foist the blame for the NKVD's mass killing of Polish nationals at Katyn on to the Nazis. The censorship and limited release in the USA of Aleksandr Dovzhenko's 1943 documentary *The Battle for our Soviet Ukraine*, which Hicks judges to be among "the most important and powerful wartime documentaries", prompted the director's bitter scorn: "Curses on you, ladies and gentlemen of America, with all your prosperity and your gentle smiles." Hicks's argument for reconsidering these films is based on meticulously close and ethically astute readings as well as archival discoveries, and acts powerfully to prompt us to redress Dovzhenko's curse. His study is part of a recent upsurge of interest in the Holocaust in Soviet lands, acting as a welcome complement to such works as Olga Gershenson's *The Phantom Holocaust: Soviet Cinema and Jewish Catastrophe*, published last year. **S**

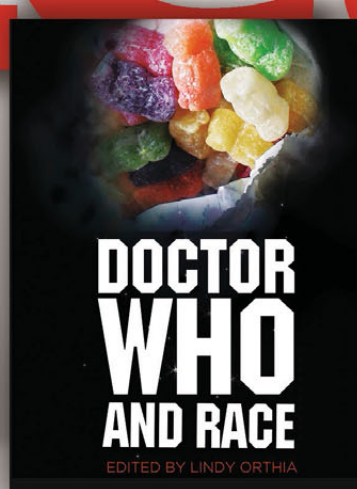
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BERLIN SCHOOL GLOSSARY

An ABC of the New Wave in German Cinema

Edited by Roger F. Cook and Lutz Koepnick and Kristin Kopp and Brad Prager, Intellect Books, paperback, 262pp, £25, ISBN 9781841505763 *Berlin School Glossary* is the first major publication to mark the increasing international importance of a group of contemporary German and Austrian filmmakers initially known as the Berlin School. The study elaborates on the innovative strategies and formal techniques that distinguish these films, specifically questions of movement, space, spectatorship, representation, desire, location and narrative. Abandoning the usual format of essay-length analyses of individual films and directors, the volume is organised as an actual glossary. This unique format, combined with an informative introduction, will be essential to scholars and fans of the German New Wave. www.intellectbooks.com



DOCTOR WHO AND RACE

Edited by Lindy Orthia, Intellect Books, paperback, 318pp, £20, ISBN 9781783200368

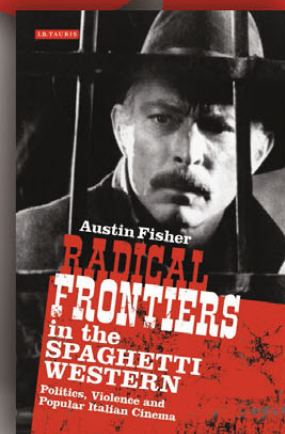
Doctor Who is the longest-running science-fiction television series in the world. While its fans adore the show with cult-like devotion, the fan-contributors to this book argue that there is an uncharted dimension to *Doctor Who*. Bringing together diverse perspectives on race and its representation, this anthology offers new understandings of the cultural significance of race in the programme – how the show's representations of racial diversity, colonialism, nationalism and racism affect our daily lives and change the way we relate to each other. In an accessible introduction to critical race theory, postcolonial studies and other race-related academic fields, the 23 contributors deftly combine examples of the popular cultural icon and personal reflections to provide an analysis that is at once approachable and filled with the intellectual rigour of academic critique. www.intellectbooks.com



FAN PHENOMENA: BUFFY THE VAMPIRE SLAYER

Edited by Jennifer K. Stuller, Intellect Books, paperback, 164pp, £15.50, ISBN 9781783200191

Featuring interviews with culture-makers, academics and creators of participatory fandom, the essays here are windows into the more personal and communal aspects of the fan experience. Essays from critical thinkers and scholars address how *Buffy* inspires the creation of, among other enduring artefacts of fandom, fan fiction, crafting, performance, cosplay and sing-alongs. As an accessible yet vigorous examination of a beloved character and her world, *Fan Phenomena: Buffy the Vampire Slayer* provokes a larger conversation about the relationship between cult properties and fandom, and how their interplay permeates the cultural consciousness, in effect contributing to culture through new narrative, academia, language and political activism. www.intellectbooks.com



RADICAL FRONTIERS IN THE SPAGHETTI WESTERN

Politics, Violence and Popular Italian Cinema

By Austin Fisher, I.B. Tauris, paperback, 320pp, £17.99, ISBN 9781780767116 Establishing the backdrop of post-war Italy in which the Roman studio system actively blended Italian and American culture, Austin Fisher looks in detail at the works of Damiano Damiani, Sergio Sollima, Sergio Corbucci, Giulio Questi and Giulio Petroni and how these directors reformatted the Hollywood western to yield new resonance for militant constituencies and radical groups. *Radical Frontiers in the Spaghetti Western* identifies the main variants of these militant westerns, which brazenly endorsed violent peasant insurrection in the 'Mexico' of the popular imagination, turning the camera on the hitherto heroic colonialists of the West and exposing the brutal mechanisms of a society infested with latent fascism. www.ibtaurisc.com



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Sam Fuller in *Pierrot le Fou*. Jean-Luc Godard 1965



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AN INGLORIOUS BASTARD

As a huge fan of the era, I was heartened to see your coverage of the autumnal renaissance of two icons of the New Hollywood in the form of Robert Redford and Bruce Dern.

To note though, the statement in the Redford article ('The old man and the sea', *S&S*, January) that he "never played a jerk, a fool or a bad guy" depends on the omission of Sidney J. Furie's little remembered aimless 1970 biker drama *Little Fauss and Big Halsy*, in which he embodies all three of those traits. His Halsy Knox, a small-time motorcycle circuit hustler, comes across as the less successful, more embittered and cruel variant on his blank-stare turn in *Downhill Racer* the previous year.

Seeing Redford embody such a reprehensible bastard for once proves to be the only real highlight of the resultant mess, which seems to be rarely mentioned in the career retrospectives of anyone involved, least of all Redford's...

Lee Teasdale London

GREEN LIGHT FOR GREENAWAY

I'd like to assure Kieron Boote of Stoke-on-Trent (Letters, *S&S*, February) that Peter Greenaway's film *Goltzius and the Pelican Company* will be released by the BFI later this year on DVD, via BFI Player and with event screenings in cinemas. He's a director who means a lot to us, not least because of his history with the Central Office of Information and BFI Production Board. We welcome his "painterly and truthful representation of human nature, political oligarchies and sex and death" and hope that audiences will too.

Jane Giles Head of Content, British Film Institute

BLOOD LINES

I read Hannah McGill's piece on cinema's menstrual taboos ('Period dramas', *S&S*, February) on the very same day I saw the Czech film *Valerie and her Week of Wonders* (1970) in the BFI's 'Gothic' season. The opening sequence shows blobs of blood falling on a yellow flower as the 13-year-old heroine finds she is menstruating for the first time. She finds the colourful effect fascinating rather than alarming, in a striking contrast to Carrie White's frightening experience.

It is also worth mentioning Floria Sigismondi's underrated film *The Runaways* (2010) about the eponymous all-female punk rock band. This, too, opens with menstrual blood splattering down on a pavement from an inconvenient first period. It is an announcement that the film will be taking us into a female world, as the girls themselves invade the male universe of rock music.

Peter Benson London

ON BLOGGERS AND BLAGGERS

Mark Cousins's recent column ('Situation Critical', *S&S*, February), yet again proved to be one of the most stimulating, passionate and polemical pieces of film writing I've read since... his last piece. Cousins's view that film critics

LETTER OF THE MONTH FRAMES OF REFERENCE



I read Mark Cousins's recent article ('Expanding the Frame', *S&S*, January 2014) with great interest. I feel that the importance of framing is a disappointingly neglected area of film interpretation. I found Cousins's opinion that the change of focus between a closely framed scene and wider framed scene occasioned a "shift from psychology and action to society, politics or metaphysics" to be particularly insightful. But he seems to take it for granted that the effects of each type of framing on the viewer are entirely different; that wider framed scenes leave the viewer with one way of interpreting a scene (political) and closely framed scenes provide the viewer with another way (psychological).

Such a view doesn't recognise the potential for the different types of framing to work together to achieve a desired effect; for instance that wider framed and politically motivated scenes could expand upon the psychological impact of more closely framed scenes, rather than simply provide a diversion from them. Evidence of such an

effect is arguably seen in the wide-framed scene near the end of Paul Greengrass's *Captain Phillips* (above) – the motivation for which Cousins questions. Cousins claims that Greengrass has "a good political reason to go wide" in the scenes of navy ships, yet he also claims that such scenes were "awe-inspiring" and gave him an "adrenalin rush".

However, is not such a purely emotional reaction in fact far detached from the cold contemplation of political analysis such a widely framed scene is, according to Cousins, meant to provoke? The adrenalin rush at the sight of a navy fleet, which only a wide-framed scene could fully capture and convey, helps us to realise how Captain Phillips himself would feel when he realised help from an outside force was coming. Far more than just "Navy SEAL porn", it is purposefully injected into the narrative by Greengrass to work in tandem with the close-framed scenes to help convey Phillips's experiences as authentically as possible.

Antony Pinol By email

"look at the world [and] see how the film relates to it" feels like an outmoded approach to criticism, out of step with the burgeoning world of online film bloggers, who seem more readily to discuss film as it relates not to any objective view of "the world" (if one were actually possible) but how it can massage and manipulate their own ego.

Cousins's idea (or hope) that the critic examines the film in juxtaposition to the world presupposes that the critic has an informed worldview at all, or at least one the readership can relate to. In Cousins's case, that's arguably true, but I'm afraid that in the wider, overcrowded world of internet film bloggers and blaggers I'm finding it hard to come by a new guard of critic with the clout, pedigree and professionalism equal to the likes of Cousins.

David Valjalo Liverpool

A QUESTION OF RACE

I am writing in reference to Sophie Mayer's review of *The Hunger Games: Catching Fire* (*S&S*, January). While it is true that Suzanne Collins's

books never explicitly state the race of the people living in District 11, beyond being described as "dark-skinned", it is reasonable to assume that the casting of mostly black people in their roles is in fact not a case of patronising "race-lifting", but actually in keeping with the author's intentions, as District 11's economic importance within Panem's system relies on its vast cotton fields located in what today would be the Deep South of the USA. This connection to slavery has often been made by fans and critics alike and seems not to have been discouraged by Collins when she co-wrote the script to the first film.

Alan Mattli Switzerland

Additions and corrections

February p.70 *Teenage*, Certificate 12A, 77m 37s, 6,985 ft +8 frames; p.78 *Crystal Fairy & the Magical Cactus* and 2012, Certificate 18, 98m 41s, 8,881 ft +8 frames; p.82 *Journal de France*, Certificate 12A, 100m 6s, 9,009 ft +0 frames; p.85 *Lone Survivor*, Certificate 15, 121m 11s, 10,906 ft +8 frames; p.86 *Moshi Monsters The Movie*, Certificate U, 81 m os; p.89 *The Patrol*, Certificate 15, 82m 46s, 7,449 ft +0 frames
January p.66 *Her*, Certificate 15, 125m 39s, 11,308 ft +8 frames
November p.73 *Cutie and the Boxer*, Certificate 12A, 82m 11s, 7,396 ft +8 frames

BEAU TRAVAIL



The finale of Claire Denis's story of jealousy and repressed desire in the French Foreign Legion is a dance between life and death

By Pasquale Iannone

There is a short series of dance sequences in French cinema that links directors Leos Carax and Claire Denis and actors Denis Lavant and Grégoire Colin. In *Mauvais Sang* (1986), Carax follows rebellious teen Alex (Lavant) as he runs and twirls down the street, beating his chest and stomach and cartwheeling to David Bowie's 'Modern Love' (a scene to which Noah Baumbach recently paid homage in 2013's *Frances Ha*). Denis's coming-of-age tale *U.S. Go Home* (1994) sees Colin play Alain, the gangly older brother of narrator-protagonist Martine (Alice Houri). In a single take, we see him dance to 'Hey Gyp' by The Animals in his bedroom – he leaps on his bed, cigarette in hand, and is completely taken over by the song's raw, bluesy energy.

Four years after *U.S. Go Home*, Denis would bring Lavant and Colin together in *Beau Travail* (1999), the story of Galoup (Lavant), a former sergeant in the French Foreign Legion looking back at the events leading to his court martial. While stationed in Djibouti, Galoup had grown increasingly jealous and suspicious of Sentain (Colin), a young legionnaire whose diligence and bravery quickly attracted the admiration of both his comrades-in-arms and their superior Forestier (Michel Subor). Based loosely on Herman Melville's novella *Billy Budd, Sailor* (published posthumously in 1924), Denis's film focuses on the ambiguous relationship between the three characters as viewed by the sexually frustrated, repressed Galoup.

Beau Travail is in many ways the perfect illustration of Denis's style: body-as-landscape and landscape-as-body, a cinema of audiovisual intimacy that dissolves boundaries between objective and subjective reality. "Sentain seduced everyone," Galoup says in voiceover. "He attracted stares. Deep down, I felt a sort of rancour, a rage brimming. I was jealous." (Galoup/*jaloux*: it's no coincidence that the name of Lavant's protagonist rhymes with the emotion that eats him up.) Although he is seen bristling with suppressed rage, the voiceover provides more than a modicum of self-awareness. "I'm sorry I was that man," he admits, "that narrow-minded legionnaire."

After finding out about his plan to finally get rid of Sentain, Forestier promptly expels Galoup from the Legion and the film ends with two brief sequences. The first – echoing the famous finale of Antonioni's *The Passenger* (1975) – sees Galoup alone in his hotel room. He makes his bed with the precision we've seen throughout the film, smoothing out creases on the sheets and making sure they're tucked tightly under the mattress. Denis then cuts to a wide tableau shot of the full regiment posing with their guns against a sun-soaked African landscape. Galoup is positioned at the centre, smiling, to Forestier's right – a brief reminder of what he's lost? We quickly return to the hotel room. The camera looks in from the window as a shirtless Galoup takes a gun from his bag and lies back on the bed. A first cut takes us to the foot of the bed looking up at him. A second – closer this time – follows his right hand

*As soon as she finished
filming the dance sequence
Claire Denis knew the film
would have to end there*

as he rests the gun flat on his stomach. The third hovers at an angle over the left side of his chest where a tattoo reads, "Serve la bonne cause et meurs" ("Serve the good cause and die"), which Galoup also whispers in voiceover. We move up to his bicep where a vein pulses and the opening of Corona's 1993 club anthem 'The Rhythm of the Night' fades up slowly on the soundtrack, an aural bridge into the film's extraordinary conclusion.

This scene takes place in the same Djibouti nightclub frequented by the legionnaires earlier in the film. Then it was filled with local girls; now it's completely empty save for Galoup. He's dressed in a crisp black shirt and trousers and smokes a cigarette as Corona thumps on the soundtrack. Moving with the grace and elegance of a professional dancer, Lavant's lithe Galoup strokes the mirrored wall, smiles and takes a few puffs. When the song comes to the lyrics, "You could put some joy upon my face/oh, sunshine in an empty place," he spins around nonchalantly. He then drops to his knees and springs up, slowly swinging his cigarette hand from side to side. Then comes the first frenetic burst of movement – twirls, leaps, limbs flailing, hunched swirls. The song continues but we cut to black and the closing credits appear. Denis brings us back to Galoup for a second 35-second dance that ends with the protagonist rolling and tumbling out of shot.

It's interesting to note that in an earlier version of the script, the dance sequence actually came first and the film ended with Galoup in his hotel room contemplating suicide. As soon as she finished filming the dance, however, Denis knew the film would have to end there. "I wanted to emphasise the fact that Galoup could escape himself," she told *Sight & Sound* in July 2000. It's certainly the most exhilarating, liberating of film endings: a scene haunted by death but also a manic affirmation of life. ●

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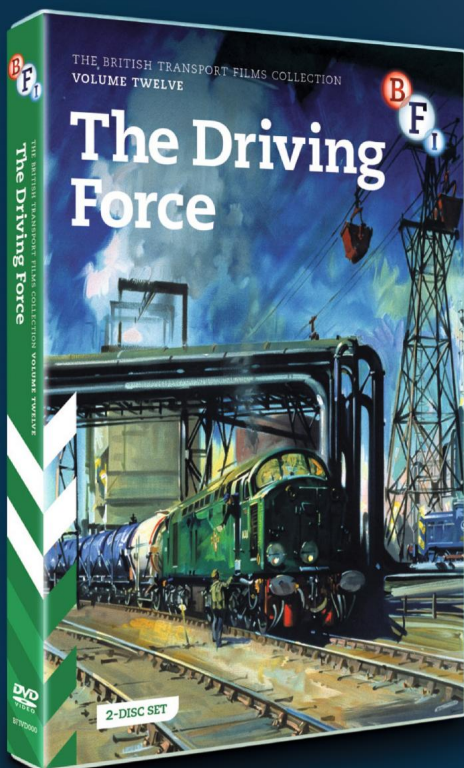
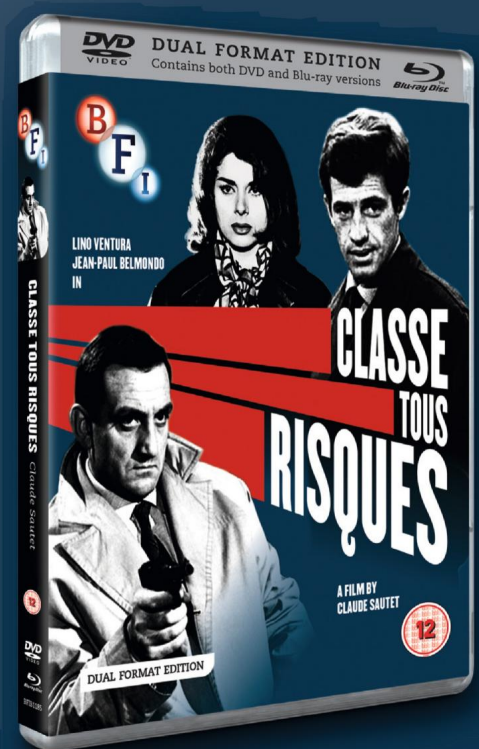
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